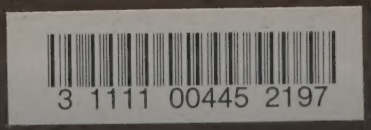
Robinson Jeffers

CALIFORNIANS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CALIFORNIANS

Robinson Jeffers

Californians

With An Introduction By

William Everson

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JEFFERS
C.

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Introduction

The justification for reissuing any immature work by a major artist lies chiefly in one thing: what it can tell us of the greater achievement to come. And this is so because there is no more mysterious and fascinating moment in human creativity than the transformation of a tentative and groping artist into a powerful and accomplished one. This fascination overrides all the objections, legitimate though they be, which can be brought against the policy, even though that policy, on the face of it, seems to patronize mediocrity.

The protest that the recent reissue of Jeffers' first book, *Flagons and Apples*, does his career a disservice at the present time is tenable. But so poignant is our need to share whatever light can be thrown upon the crystalization of the man's major achievement that it overrules our reservations. We brush aside the obvious objection in our need for background material pertinent to the greater work itself. For instance, I have heard it maintained that the qualitative gulf between Jeffers' early and late work is one of the most emphatic in all literature. This is untrue, but until now the reader has had no way of estimating such a break. *Flagons and Apples* has simply not been available.

When I was approached, therefore, to write the introduction to the present volume, Jeffers' second, I found myself more confident than I might otherwise have been. My satisfaction with the reissue of *Flagons and Apples* had dispelled whatever lurking apprehensions the rumored reissue of *Californians* gave rise to. And in this new confidence I found myself wanting to look at the book not from the perspective of Jeffers' mature work, where I knew its value lay, but to see it as he wrote it, see it from the point of view within which he

poured it out. For an artist rarely sees his future course when he writes; he sees the immediate vision. Composing at white heat, he creates out of the awesome impetus of a masterpiece being born. In his view it *is* a masterpiece, and it is terminal, final. He subsumes his whole past as he produces, which is what gives it its absolute character. Unfortunately that sense of psychological absoluteness accounts as much for its faults as it does for any virtues which may survive in it. Before a man's sensibility matures nothing is more total than his conviction of the ultimateness of what he does. The adolescent poet pours out his first poem to his first girl and is convinced by the totality of his feeling that both the girl and the moment are immortal. And he is right; for his moment is archetypal, and hence is indeed immortal. It is only *what he makes of it* that crumbles with time and fades.

So I began *Californians* seeking to reexperience Jeffers' impetus as he wrote it. This volume I had avoided all the years of my study of Jeffers because I never had the need to approach it from so basic a point of view. Granted, it stood in the open stacks at the Fresno Public Library when I foraged downtown from Fresno State to expand my knowledge of this prophet who hit me so hard that he changed the direction of my life. But even then I knew *Californians* could not serve my need, and I did not care to dilute the purity of revelation by lacing it with conventional predecessors. Powell's synopsis of it in his basic book on Jeffers contented me. I think I was right. When the present publisher sent it to me, I unwrapped the rare package with curious respect, and began to read it in the light of the newly tasted *Flagons and Apples.* I felt immediately, of course, that I was witnessing a great step forward in the evolution of a poet. But that of itself meant little.

However, it was not surprising that despite my good in-

tentions I was unable to read *Californians* at the hoped-for level of involvement. Only a little of that came through: an increase of craftsmanship brought about by a focussing of intellectual energy, and hence a more elaborate diction than is evident in *Flagons and Apples;* the marmoreal presence of conventional meters, and out of it a kind of formal authority, tending inevitably toward the creation of "memorable lines," a value that our current "projective verse" movement has pretty much discarded.

And in fact when Jeffers published *Californians* in the mid-teens the modernist revolution that would lead to our current projectivist emphasis in poetry was already launched. Imagism was in the air, denoting the need for a more explicit diction to replace the idiom of the period that was even then proving exhausted in the hands of the Georgians. But in *Californians,* Jeffers, using that idiom, seems quite unaware of the threat. He has no sense of a man writing in a beleaguered mode, a mode on the verge of exhaustion, one that has to be insisted upon against the rising star of innovators. Obviously, he feels his medium is adequate to his message, and obviously the best work of the book rests in that feeling. What we have is the effort of a worthy poet striving, as every committed poet does, to bend a fit instrument into transcendent use, and in the better passages he succeeds:

> *Odi et amo!* "Loving thee I hate!"
> The tenderest fieriest mouth of Roman song
> Cried to his strumpet-goddess from the long
> Passion, the wild desire, the vain regret,
> Cried to his strumpet-goddess—Greater wrong
> Urges who cries to men: For love of you
> Hatred of all exceeds my love of few!
>
> (MALDROVE, IX)

Taken in stride, even the jarring final rhyme seems lifted out of constriction, as we see such rhymes often lifted in, say, Shakespeare, by the sense of plenitude invested in a marriage with the idiom, giving the supremely confident poet his stretch of freedom. In *Californians* Jeffers is no Shakespeare; but it is apparent that he often feels the exultation of one.

As I say, then, well-intentioned as was my original resolve to read the work as Jeffers wrote it, I soon began to encounter elements that swept me forward into the greater work ahead: prefigurements, parallels, a recurrence of evocative devices that here exist principally *in potentia*. Looking back on them from the plateau of the higher achievement, there indeed seemed a lack of finality in these initial manifestations. And I began to recognize that even after making allowance for the idiom of the period this lack of finality, increasing as one progresses, emerges as the chief limitation of the volume.

For instance, the hermit in "Stephen Brown" is clearly the prototype of the later "A Redeemer" and "An Artist," but Jeffers does not yet know what to do with him. Emilia of the poem by that name, dances alone as Tamar will later dance, but Emilia's decorous sarabande has no issue. In this poem, too, her sister invokes the rain-glutted road to welcome respite from a persistent lover. Jeffers would use it later, chiefly in the prologue to *The Women at Point Sur*, where Myrtle Cartwright seeks out her profane love because her husband cannot return across the bridge-spewing coastal creeks, and likewise young Howren's mother's false vision in *Such Counsels You Gave to Me* touches Jeffers' sense of isolation from the world which rain on the road seems to evoke in him. Then there is the astonishing prefigurement, to one familiar with the later work, in "The Vardens," where the death cry of the father dissociates itself from the flesh and soars, hearkening ahead to Jeffers' unprecedented depictions of souls-at-death in *Cawdor*

and "At the Birth of an Age." But in "The Vardens" the poet has not yet got the cosmic sense to clinch the issue in a true catharsis. All is as yet earthbound, swaddled in sentience. The amorphousness of earth and the earth-mood maintains an unquestioned authority over his poet's soul, and he cannot really spread his wings. As I read on I wondered, Why? The religious spirit is here, the pantheism and, yes, the mysticism. All are here, indeed. But the spirit remains unliberated.

But it was "The Three Avilas" that made the underlying implication of these prefigurements really jolt my mind. For in this poem Jeffers touched the ancient theme of incest, always so powerful a symbolic subject for him, touched it for the first time, the theme that gave his breakthrough-to-come such a smashing impact on his period, and the one which stimulated much speculation as to the meaning of his preoccupation with it. Some have accused him of morbidity, which is not surprising, but in a recent essay Robert Brophy touches on its correspondence to Shelley's use in "The Cenci" and, in relating it to the great tradition, gives each poet a clean bill of health.

> In the case of both Shelley and Jeffers, incest as a dramatic device comes not from a prurient mind as much as from an artist's precise need for a structure-shattering symbol.[1]

No one reading *Tamar* today can doubt the justness of this conclusion. But reading "The Three Avilas" something very different emerges. In this first use of incest Jeffers has no such objectivity as *Tamar's* theme to discipline his direction. The same earthbound mood as invests the whole volume shows the incestuous motif as something more deeply sub-

1. "Tamar, The Cenci, and Incest," *American Literature*, May, 1970, p. 241.

jective, more intimately involved in the dynamics of the poet's own psyche. On the basis of it one is compelled to question Brophy's conclusion and ask: Is it possible that with Jeffers the motif comes not from the need for a structure-shattering symbol, but from an incestuous mind?

I believe that it is. But in conceding it, one wishes to precisely limit the implications, otherwise we find ourselves back at the discredited attribution of a prurient mind, not to speak of a sick one. Clearly, such an attribution oversimplifies the profound psychology of the artist. For the deeper psychological analysis probes the poet's soul, the more it finds that its workaday categories of normalcy and aberration are subsumed in a far deeper dimension.

First of all, "The Three Avilas" is a confessional poem in the way that *Tamar* is not, and therefore stands upon another footing. The crucial part of the poem is addressed directly to the poet's wife, Una, and it is startling, from our wary, post-Freudian point of view, to observe Jeffers—in a poem about incest, mind you—addressing Una as his sister!

Now it is obvious, of course, that Jeffers, in "The Three Avilas," uses incest strictly as the analogy of his sense of personal misconduct. In the narrative he describes how a brother and sister, reared separately in Mexico, learn of their blood relationship only after they have already fallen deeply in love. Rather than renounce each other they flee to the California coast, but ere long are pursued by a vengeful brother and dispatched forthwith in an execution-murder. As outlined, the plot is unalloyed melodrama.

But Jeffers then recalls how he and Una themselves fell in love before they could be said to be aware of the consequences, giving rise to the conjecture that when Jeffers first beheld Una in class at The University of Southern California he might well have been smitten before realizing she

was a married woman. At any rate they too, he tells us, in the full recognition of their adultery, decided to opt for consummation rather than the prescribed moral code, and themselves came to this same "spot of incest," the dank, weed-grown defile near Carmel. Here, the poem narrates, every day Jeffers and Una paused to rest while carrying driftwood back from the beach, and here, he further tells us in his note to the poem, the foreboding place so touched his spirits that the poem "grew up like a plant from the ravine described in it." In other words, daily pausing here to rest, surrounded in that dank nook which he populates, in the best Gothic tradition, with bloated toads, bats, lank weeds, slimy fungus, and blood-swollen sunsets, the trouble in him, his problem of conscience, stirs awake. He conceives this tale of incest in order to set down something about Una and himself that he could touch in no other way.

Limited to this bare outline, what the poem states is no more than that the forbidden love of Avila and Marina (incest) finds a correspondence in the equally forbidden love of himself and Una (adultery). But what the diction, the urgency, the creative involvement reveals is something far deeper, namely, that in the rifts of his unconscious, his own love for Una is recognized as itself something incestuous. To Una he says, revisiting the place where in his imagination the incest of Avila and Marina occurred:

> Lie still and stir not! while I quietly
> Tell my deep heart's own sister, my desire
> And dear delight, your living misery.
> O sister of my heart, . . .
>
> (VERSE 21)

Then, after narrating the course of the incestuous lovers, he exclaims:

> O, do you see in hardly alien fate
> Our imaged own? We also are come from burning
> The world behind us . . .
>
> My deep heart's dear one sister and lone mate,
> Yes we would weep—but would we long go
> mourning—
> Were it not also joy—if us like them
> One tree had borne, twin-blossoms of one stem?
> (VERSE 28)

In declaring that even if he and Una had learned too late that they were brother and sister they would likewise not have forgone physical passion, Jeffers is saying psychologically that Una is his sibling. In his crisis of conscience he is all but declaring that their adulterous love is the incestuous love of brother and sister.

Nor does the matter end there. For psychology tells us as well that the physical love of brother with sister is actually the Oedipus complex operating at an imponderably deep level. Sexual union of brother and sister is symbolically the sexual union of son with mother. Not only so, but psychology also tells that the passion of an unmarried youth for a married woman, and in this case a woman his senior, is itself oedipal. No matter what construction he puts upon it she is in fact a maternal symbol. No prudent psychologist, of course, would declare such an oedipal ingredient to be necessarily the ruling motive in such a liaison. But he would nevertheless insist on its presence, and if any objective evidence emerged in the course of analysis to back up his hunch, he would not hesitate

to elevate an underlying ingredient to the position of a ruling motive. Reading *Tamar* this hypothetical psychologist would be tempted to see such evidence in the poem's incestuous theme. Reading "The Three Avilas" he would have no doubt.

What we are seeking to trace is the genesis of a major artist who could create an objectively universalized statement like *Tamar* out of a subjective confessional theme like "The Three Avilas." And I do not use the word "confessional" in a pejorative sense. In that poem Jeffers without doubt was disburdening his soul of the guilt of an objective sin, adultery. By hindsight we can see that he was doing so because his creative destiny demanded that the incestuous ingredient in his adultery be resolved at the personal level before he could later approach the archetypal implications of the theme in *Tamar*. What we are suggesting is that below his relationship to Una the current of that universal volition (incest) ran through his relation to his mother, but beyond her to the even deeper dimension, the secret clue to the inner life of any artist. Erich Neumann in his "Leonardo da Vinci and the Mother Archetype" [2] has dealt at length with the artist's closeness to the archetypal feminine as ruler of the creative unconscious, and of the rewards and perils of him who by destiny is launched upon the artistic vocation. What "The Three Avilas" affords us is a perspective from which the convergence of two strains, the personal and the archetypal, can be glimpsed.

Does art, then, defer to the hypotheses of psychoanalysis? It does not. *Tamar* exists. "The Three Avilas" exists. We estimate each on the basis of its relative aesthetic achievement, asserting that *Tamar* is primary whereas "The Three Avilas" is not. But we have already seen that the principal reason for

2. *Art and the Creative Unconscious*, New York, 1959, p. 3.

studying the preliminary work of a master is not so much for what it is in itself, but for what it presages about the greater achievement to come. What, then, can "The Three Avilas" tell us about *Tamar*, save that each concerns incest? It is the answer to this question which throws us back on the motivating psychology of the poet, and therefore upon his biography. For clearly, the two poems are not saying the same thing.

In my essay "Archetype West" [3] I spoke of Jeffers as the prophet par excellence of the Western movement, and I placed its apotheosis in *Tamar*. I wrote of that poem's long societal preparation, stating that Jeffers' historic moment could not have been better. I further affirmed that neither could the moment in his own soul have been better:

> When the mother of Robinson Jeffers died in 1921, liberating, as the death of the mother so often does, the creative energy fixated in the soul of her son, the breakthrough poem which Jeffers poured out gave the Western archetype its fiercest clench and its prospective apotheosis.

And I went on to conjecture that:

> The long life of the mother forced him to bank his interior fires, enduring her omnipresence till death could grant him release from the unconscious maternal authority over his soul.

3. *Regions and Nations: Our Contemporary Literary Heritage*, edited by John Gordon Burke, Chicago (in Press).

The point has been questioned, if not challenged.[4] What I meant was that when an artist espouses a married woman older than himself, clearly his moment of psychic leave-taking of the maternal archetype has not yet arrived. His body is mature—it needs physical confirmation on the being of a woman—but his soul is still nascent, still hovering under the long maternal nurturing, still being fed on the evocative and sentient maternal instigation, so that to take, in a woman, a mother in the bride, is to instinctively prolong the maternal nurturing, even as he enters manhood in the taking of his mate. Not having yet read *Californians* I went on to say:

> Thus two inferior books enabled him to jettison the purely cultural overlay of received poetic forms and be free for a new technique when his breakthrough moment arrived.

This is true, but in the light of "The Three Avilas" it is distinctly secondary.

Actually, what the death of the mother does for such an artist is to open the way for his long-deferred entry into the patriarchy. Speaking symbolically, this means a transition from the childhood primacy of mood (the maternal) to the adult primacy of ideas (the paternal). Without doubt not the least

4. I might as well acknowledge at the outset that my intuition regarding the liberation of Jeffers' creative spirit following the death of his mother is basically introspective, founded on my own experience. The increase in universality after my mother died in December of 1940 is evident in the turn taken by my writing shortly thereafter. Quite unaware of any connection between that death and my literary activity, the course of later psychological investigation brought home to me how marked a turning point in my creative life it was. I cannot apologize for the introduction of subjective criteria here, because in the absence of something more concrete, introspection must suffice.

interest of *Californianans* is that is shows Jeffers' intellect struggling to be born. Which of the symbolic patriarchal images available emerged to displace the primacy of the maternal, effect the transfer from mood to ideas that is traditionally the role of adolescence [5] and which in the artist is generally deferred well into manhood, is difficult to say. Certain it is that his assimilation of the intellectual giants of his time—Nietzche, Freud, Spengler—had been long augmenting.

Una herself, however, attributed the transformation to his contact with stone, one of the archetypal symbols of his verse. In a letter to Powell she wrote:

> The conflict of motives on the subject of going to war or not was probably one of several factors that, about this time, made the world and his own mind much more real and intense to him. Another factor was the building of Tor House. As he helped the masons shift and place the wind- and wave-worn granite I think he realized some kinship with it, and became aware of strengths in himself unknown before. Thus at the

5. As in the immortal refutation of the Christ-child, when at puberty, missed from the caravan returning to Galilee, he was found by his parents in the temple back in Jerusalem conversing with the elders:

> And when they saw him they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.
>
> And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?
>
> And they understood not the saying which he spoke to them.
>
> (LUKE, II)

Christ was a man who had no time to spare, but it is not infrequent that the poet is unable to pronounce these words until he is in his twenties.

> age of thirty-one there came to him a kind of awakening such as adolescents and religious converts are said to experience.[6]

Because of its coldness and permanence stone is a patriarchal symbol, and constructive preoccupation with it undoubtedly was instrumental in preparing Jeffers for the crossover. But the year 1918 bore no poetry that we can point to as marking the crystalizing psychic event that *Tamar* manifestly is. For until the mother passes, actually or symbolically, these particular images are retained in the soul of the artist in a state of suspension. It is only when the mother herself releases the son that the complex is dispelled, and until that happens, there can be no accounting for the convolutions and thrashing of the poet's psyche in its struggle for liberation.

Some of these convultions are dramatic in the extreme. Jeffers, facing prospect of death symbolized by America's entry into the first World War, threw himself into an extramarital love affair. He spells it out in "Mal Paso Bridge," one of the works in *Tamar and Other Poems* that obviously predates the title piece. No more telling revolt at Una's maternal grip on his life is possible. *But it was still the mother!* For his new love was herself a mother:

> Under Mal Paso bridge the long-maned sea-waves
> Beat up into the stream, on the other bank
> A woman with a little child was standing,
> Her daughter three years old, the woman's face
> Though it seemed white against the storm was brown,
> Her body and face I thought were beautiful,
> Her eyes and hair were stormier than the cloud,
> I trembled when she turned her eyes upon me.

6. Lawrence Clark Powell, *Robinson Jeffers, The Man and His Work*, Pasadena, 1940, pp. 17.

This act of violational liberation was at least partially efficacious in terms of the creative emergence we are tracing, for he attributes it to a major stylistic innovation in his work:

> Therefore I swore to drink wine while I could,[7]
> Love where I pleased, and feed my eyes
> With Santa Lucian sea-beauty, and moreover
> To shear the rhyme-tassels from verse.

Be it noted in this regard that in the collective unconscious the maternal image presides over the world of convention whereas the image of the father presides over the world of principle. To shear the rhyme-tassels from verse is to cancel convention in a bid to live by creative principle. It was a salutary resolve but as the work itself shows it could not be truly liberating. The real moment had not yet arrived.

And indeed with the Armistice and the passing of the death-threat of war, the poet could truly begin his work of transformation, ready himself for the crossover. It would, however, take another three years. For truly, more than rhyme-tassels must be sheared; the umbilical cord itself must be cut. In the death of the mother the artist's own demeaning death is assimilated, and finally, and at terrible lengths—lengths of shame, lengths of doubt, lengths of debilitation

7. In that "while I could" we see a tacit acknowledgement of the impetus of the death-threat behind his bid for liberation. I am not speaking of personal cowardice, but of the youthful artist's need to hoard and preserve his vision until it is written out. For truly the prophet who is threatened with death before he has divested himself of his message is an entirely different figure from the serene sage who steadfastly accepts death after he is well assured that his message is out of his guts and on its way in the world. When the citizens of his own city of Nazareth sought to hurl Christ from a cliff in the first year of his ministry, he extricated himself from their hands and vanished. But after his work was completed he permitted himself to be crucified despite Pilate's efforts to free him.

and impotence—he can stand forth in the actuality of liberation and write his release. In charting the graph of the creative evolution of Robinson Jeffers, that release we know as *Tamar*.[8]

But if the death of the mother can be credited with the release of a new dynamism in the poet, it cannot explain the radical change in tone, the mood that so markedly sets *Tamar and Other Poems* off from *Californians*. To explain it, the disillusionment following the war is most often adduced, but it seems like something far more personal must have occurred, some trauma, precipitating the soul into aspects of itself previously unsuspected.

In support of this there is an incident which Jeffers relates in "Come, Little Birds" from the *Be Angry at the Sun* volume of 1941. He describes a seance in which, through the help of a seeress, he is able to penetrate to the world of the dead, to Endor, as he calls it, after the biblical First Book of Samuel. In that account the seeress slaughters a calf to revive King Saul, stunned by the prediction of his death on the morrow. Jeffers, however, moves the calf-killing up to furnish the blood through which the spirits are summoned, as in the sheep-

8. Unfortunately, the actual date of composition is not known. In *The Colophon; No. 10;* Jeffers' account of breaking into print, "First Books," he places the poem as "1920 or 1921." When queried by S. S. Alberts, his bibliographer, who doubted it could be that early, Una replied, "He says 1921 or 1922 for *Tamar* is the nearest he can recollect." Alberts then goes on to record the discovery of a fragment of preface dated June, 1922, written by Jeffers for a collection of poems in which *Tamar* is not included. He concludes from this that it was not yet written. However, the dating of a preface is often adjusted to the anticipated date of publication rather than applying to the date of its actual composition. At any rate, in the prefatory fragment itself Jeffers speaks of developing a "rhymeless narrative measure of my own; but the poems are not finished and not included in this series." Since he uses the plural it is evident that the narrative work following *Tamar* was already begun, putting that poem already in the wrap-up stage when the passage was written.

slaying to evoke the dead in the eleventh book of the Odyssey. Among those summoned appears his father. The prodigal asks forgiveness of the sire whose code he has offended, and indeed receives his absolution. But in the very same moment he meets the quintessential feminine spirit whose story, when he tells it, will launch him upon the course of his creative destiny. "I am Tamar Cauldwell from Lobos," she commands him. "Write my story. Tell them I have my desire."

The use of the calf in both accounts seems to indicate a merely literary situation employed by the poet, but he positively identifies the seance as having occurred in 1920, and there is indeed something about "Come, Little Birds" that carries the stamp of direct reporting. It might well be that at an actual seance the killing of a calf led Jeffers to make the association with the biblical Endor. In any case the incident is prefigured in *Californians* by the poem "The Year of Mourning."

Dedicated to his father and modelled on the classical elegiac form of Milton's *Lycidas*, the poem was written across the year 1915 following his father's demise the previous December. It is also dedicated to his daughter Maeve who had been stillborn the previous May. These two deaths he places together, almost as one. It is unquestionably the best poem in the book, and it tells us more about Jeffers relation to his father than any other thing so far published. In the ninth part he asks:

> Shall I seek darker counsel, shall I take
> Resort to such as murmur in the gloom
> With tortured Pythian lips familiar names
> And tongues of mortal slumber? Must I fee
> That lost king's Endor-witch to answer me?

Then he writes as if he had indeed sought help of a medium, and indeed heard his father's loved voice, rejecting it as a mere projection of his own need. The whole incident is obviously rhetorical. But it is possible that such a medium actually lived near Carmel, that Una and Jeffers had heard of her. If so, she comes to mind when he writes the poem, but he rejects recourse to her.

But five years later, in the psychological impasse that a prolonged sojourn under the maternal hegemony imposes, with the long-deferred paternal blessing unavailable, guilty under the weight of his new adultery, with all its incestuous overtones, and hungering deliverance into the positive intellectual crystalization that will transmute his impasse into relevance—it could well be that he sought out such a seeress. As I say, what he writes of this event has all the stamp of direct reporting, quite different from the dismissal set down in "The Year of Mourning." Now he does hear his father's voice, but he no longer discounts it as the projection of his own need. In "Come, Little Birds" he gives every evidence of accepting his father's presence as authentic.

And the actuality of such an event seems confirmed by an obscure passage which Jeffers excised from the manuscript of the poem "Theory of Truth." I looked at it in the Lockwood Memorial Library of the University of Buffalo, where together with a letter of presentation from Jeffers dated "Tor House, May, 1941," it is kept with the drafts of the other three unpublished poems which close the *Selected Poetry* volume of 1938. In the poem referred to, the struck-out passage follows the tenth line, the one beginning, "And godless Buddha. . . " The excised passage reads:

> *By the Big Sur narrows I meet my father and*
> *mother—*
> *a dear friend "whom I will not name"*

And Cawdor perhaps and certain others. Cawdor is disillusioned and might tell Macbeth.

Above this is written, *"I betrayed him to death, but not viciously. He laps the blood."* But it is not clear to whom the reference is intended.[9] And finally there is a marginal note in parentheses which reads: *"(In the same volume print The Pit in the Pinewood, written in 1919)."*

The introduction of this Big Sur Narrows incident into the poem is fortuitous and had to be excised. But that argues for rather than against a specific event.[10] Often the actual does obtrude into the creative vision simply because it *is* actual, but, as here, does not have sufficient relevance to survive in the speculative or aesthetic dimension of the completed poem. But doubtless this pertinence of actuality led Jeffers to directly recall the incident in "Come, Little Birds," as well as to employ the motif in the masque "The Bowl of Blood," all written about the same time. Clearly, the approach of World War II was taking him back into something fearful and ominous in his past that he had long left quiet.

9. George Sterling seems most likely. In *The Overland Monthly* for November, 1927, Jeffers gives his account of Sterling's death: "One night a year ago I dreamed about the interior of an ancient church, a solid place of damp stone about which the earth had crept up, beautiful in its ruin, somewhat like the Carmel Mission before they restored it. Sterling and I were there in the stone twilight, among many worshipers, and I said though it was pleasant we mustn't stay, it was time to return outdoors. But he preferred to stay, and I returned alone, and awoke. The afternoon after that night a newspaper reporter came to tell me that Sterling had died. We had not seen him for several months but were expecting a visit from him that week or the next."

10. Some will say that the poet's provisional interjection of such literary figures as his own Cawdor and Shakespeare's MacBeth demonstrates that the episode is completely fictional. I disagree. Rather I would say that the episode was real enough, as demonstrated by its forced intrusion into the scenario of "Theory of Truth," whereas the accommodation of such figures as Cawdor and MacBeth merely shows the poet's frantic attempts, caught unprepared by the precipitate intrusion of this archetypal event into his poem, to accommodate it into the thesis.

If the incident is indeed an actual event, and if Jeffers is correct in recalling (as he does in "Come, Little Birds") that the seance occurred in 1920, his mother was still alive. If he meant to write: *I meet my father and daughter*, as would seem most likely from "The Year of Mourning" the slip of the pen is most revealing. In that case he means *daughter*, writes *mother*, and in "Come, Little Birds," introduces *Tamar!* Such is the awesome power of the eternal feminine in the soul of the poet.

But if Jeffers is wrong in his date—if indeed it was his mother's death early in 1921 rather than something in 1920 that induced him to actually seek out the seeress as he declined to do in 1915 following his father's death, then his recall of almost twenty years later is equally revealing. And indeed from this point of view it matters little whether the incident actually occurred or not: it is the symbolism that is so telling about the disposition of the soul that evolves it. For he writes: *"By the Big Sur narrows I meet my father and mother . . . "* But in the gestation of his art what emerges is not his mother in the flesh but his mother in the spirit, daughter of incest and spirit of holy violation, who burns pure because she burned beyond equivocation—Tamar Cauldwell of Lobos—who had only one thing to say to the world from beyond the grave: "Tell them I *have* my desire!"

To sum up, then, what emerges as the principal impression of a first reading of *Californians* by one long familiar with Jeffers' work, is an emptying, or depotentiation, of the agonized Jeffersian landscape, a kind of insular unrealization that leaves it merely pastoral and inert. There is as much emphasis on actual place-names as would later occur, but they are approached from a different segment of the psychic hemisphere. The torment is quite lacking, and we hardly seem to be in the same world. One is left with the impression that if the mother's death did liberate the soul of her son into intellectual

realization, something equally powerful, something twisted and misanthropic, awesome and terrible, had simultaneously occurred.

What the event was that changed the pastoral landscape of *Californians* into the tortured landscape of *Tamar* doubtless will never be certainly known. But unquestionably between the two works something radical and conclusive did occur. With the later work a new world has been entered, and it is truly "real" in a way that the natural landscape of *Californians* never is. I believe that this super-real unreality is the result of a direct penetration into the parapsychological dimension, the awesome reality of the world beyond.

For with Jeffers, as with Yeats, the depiction of the occult and preternatural has about it the authenticity of personal experience—not something derived from literary sources, but something experienced and accredited, something rendered as true and hence believable. Until other evidence emerges (and it may well be that the unpublished poem "The Pit in the Pinewood" holds the key) I myself will continue to place that transformation from the relativity of the real to the absoluteness of the unreal in a very definite "descent to the dead"—the poet's memorable encounter with the world beyond, the son's finding of the long-sought father, and the fiery liberation of the spirit of his mother, who loved him not only like a mother but like a lover, and, as true lover, became Tamar. If this conjecture is accurate it denotes a most significant change in names (Mother-Tamar) the lisp of the lover infusing in the name of his beloved both her sacred and her profane essences. Such a transposition would not at all be farfetched. We have Jeffers' own statement that it was performed under the tutelage of that supremely accomplished mythical mother, the Witch of Endor.

William Everson
Stinson Beach, California
August 28, 1971
The Feast of Saint Augustine

Californians

Invocation

O evening star deep in the deep west burning,
Far over the faint line of flickering foam;
A solitary star, and unreturning

But with return of night: thy sisters come
Laughing out of the east, but thou declinest;
Day wanes no faster than thou fliest home;

Thou wilt not, though in heaven, O divinest,
Endure divided glory, nor too near
Approach, nor multitude. Alone thou shinest.

Thou hast precedence in heaven: have it here
In song, and in my heart that yearns afar
Above the wave-tops toward thy splendor clear,

Lamp of the west, O loveliest wandering-star!
And thinks how oft at closing in of days
Nameless, and evening respites of dim war,

My fathers looked from unremembered ways
Up to thy guiding light; and swore at dawn
To turn their shoulders dawnward, and still gaze

The whole day toward thy setting; and were drawn
Out of huge Asia, past the Euxine Sea,
Northward of cloudy Caucasus, and on

Westward, free wanderers. They would look for thee
At fire-lighting each night; but when thy face
Was hidden, there they halted, eagerly

Awaiting thy new birth, and in that place
Built huts and plowed the field. Thy light renewed,
They rose, and tracked westward the wilderness.

Now I, the latest, in this solitude
Invoke thee from the verge extreme, and shoal
Of sand that ends the west. O long-pursued,

Where wilt thou lead us now? What greater goal
Gleams for our longing down the abysm of time?
What weariness of body and worn soul?
What farther west? What wanderings more sublime?

Stephen Brown

—In the San Bernardino Mountains,
Traveling from sky-peaked Grayback to Bear Lake,
In a deep-shaded dell I saw great fountains
Of shining water from the black earth break,
And pour through heavy-fronded ferns below,
And down the dark ravine a turbulence make
As of immortal footsteps, when they go
Assured and at their will the wide world to and fro.

Beyond, I met a lone old man, who walked
My way; and he was merry as a bird
In the familiar forest, yet he talked
But little; at long intervals a word
Laughed on his lips to show his inward joys.
As for my answers, they were never heard;
The old man was deaf to every earthly noise;
Yet often smiled as if he heard some spiritual voice.

He was but five feet tall; and like an elf
Quick-footed; and a thin gray beard he had.
He spoke of woods and mountains and himself
As if they were old friends, and deeply glad
All of the others' company. "But come
Up to my house and share my food," he said.
"There's plenty in store: for each of us a crumb."
Then asked me whither I went, and where I had journeyed from.

I answered, though he heard not; and we came
To his log-cabin, all of unbarked wood.
Upon a sideling hill, clipped in a frame

Of huge dark pines, and well-withdrawn it stood,
Two hundred paces from the lonely trail.
Close by, a trickle of dancing water flowed,
And, through a hollowed sapling's trough, some fell
As from a spout, and tinkled in a wooden pail.

The old man walked proudly ahead; and, I could see,
Glad to be gracious, for his guests were rare.
All that his larder served, he speedily
Displayed upon the table white and bare.
And, after luncheon ended, he talked more
Than while we walked. "There's youth in mountain air,"
He said; "you wouldn't guess I'm seventy-four?
And younger now, I think, than ever I was before."

He had lived thirty years in this one spot,
High in the lonely mountains:—here he leaped
Out of his chair, and from a closet brought
A treasured document, a column clipped
From a newspaper of the valley town.
"Read this," he said, and with one finger flipped
The folded print. I read how Stephen Brown,
Seventy-three years old, had lately travelled down

From (said the newspaper) his hermitage,
Thirty miles in a day, through snow waist-deep,—
A journey few strong men of half his age
Would dare—to visit valley friends, and keep
The Christmas with them.—While I read, the old man
Laughed boylike; when I looked at him, a deep
Quick flood of red across his pale cheek ran;
And troubled like a boy, and blushing, he began:

"There's one man lives at Bear Lake Dam, and one
At Mountain Lodge: three of us altogether
Winter up here. When snow flies, you stay on
Till the March thaw, and watch the wild white weather
Fill up the windows:—but, last year, I meant
To see my friends." He paused; I knew not whether
To wonder more that he the long descent
Had dared, or that his other winters here were spent.

I took a card and wrote: "It's ten hard miles
To Bear Lake Dam; to Mountain Lodge eighteen.
—If you should fall ill?"—"Why," the old man smiles,
"I'd be no worse off then than I *have* been.
I was consumptive, I came west, you'd say,
With death holding my hand. So dry and lean,
If I'd gone barefoot I'd have blown away.
They gave me six months' life, but not another day.

"I'd always loved the trees; and half a year
Was half a year; and it was springtime then.
I'd always loved the mountains; I came here,
But soon, instead of dying, I lived again.
I like my hill, though it is far removed
From the sweet looks and kindly help of men."
—The old man spoke now as if in words approved
By lingering thought: "We grow to be what we have loved."

Now when I went my way I wondered still
What he had meant in saying, "We grow to be
What we have loved." Was it, that in the hill
Buried, he would grow into earth and tree,
And briar and fern? Or did he rather mean
That, by such love uplifted and made free

From common fears, he had become serene
As Nature's darling children evermore have been?

The mighty peaks that bathe in viewless air,
The pines that murmur by the mountain streams,
What thoughts have they? We know they do not share
Our passions, the disturbance of our dreams.
But as I looked about me, treading slowly
The canyon trail, the curtain of what seems
Was lifted, and my heart grew glad and lowly:
"O happy earth," I cried, "O fearless, O most holy!"

Then I remembered with no change of mood
That aged man whose wisdom was serene.
—He stands now in my memory, as he stood
Upon his cabin threshold, and between
The door-posts of rough pine, to say good-by.
A little man, scant-bearded, old and lean;
A man at home in the world to live or die,
Self-stationed, self-upheld as the all-beholding sky.

Emilia

1

The old heart of the world is changed not with its dress.
Give thanks to God; and presently read on.
—High on a lovely hill, which cypresses
And somber eucalypts had overgrown;
And eastward from its height Los Angeles,
Or rather of her lights the untimely dawn,
Was seen at nightfall; but the daytime breeze
Brought ever the sharp breath of western seas;

2

And at the hill's foot, thrusting forth her piers
Like water-roots, Redondo not content
Numbers her shipping; and beyond appears
The inviolable eternal element,
Lapped in that azure mantle which it wears
Unfaded from the morn of time; and bent
Perfectly like a crescent, the bay reaches
South, and far north, on foam-wet glistening beaches:—

3

High on this far-viewed hill, and over-spired
By cypresses, and locked with tangled boughs
Of live-oaks and the eucalypts; retired
Into a sober distance which allows
But murmurs, as of insects evening-choired,
From shore and harbor, stood her father's house.
White-fronted and flat-roofed it was, with small
Grilled balconies before the windows tall.

4

It looked straight westward; when the sun declining
Stood flushed above the far verge of the seas
In a sky of amber and rose, his level shining
Cast the slim shadows of the cypress trees
Like ribbons up the wall, with darkness lining
The deep-set casements and the balconies;
While gleamed with sunset colors glorious
The window-panes, as fire were in the house.

5

Low down against the wall, yet vinelike too,
With sudden upward reaches as of flame,
Rich and full-flowered with yellow and orange, grew
Streptoslen bushes, and their blossoms came
Up to the window-ledges, clinging to
The rough and cream-white plaster; and these same
Climbed the broad door-posts of the central door
On trellises unseen, and arched it o'er.

6

Beyond the driveway wall and hedge of privet
Tall dahlias answered the streptoslen bushes
In color:—as the liquor of high Glenlivet
Finds new youth in a worn man's veins, and flushes
His overshadowed cheek—or brandy'll give it
The same ambrosial ardor: so these gushes
Of lively color lit the house and park,
Which cypresses and blue-gums made so dark.

7

But there was fragrance too, that quietly crept
Across the narrow paths, among the stems
Spiring or gnarled of tufted trees, and swept
The lawns, with trailing as of silken hems
And whispering; or at windless nightfall slept
Against the doorstep. Like a miser's gems
Were hid the little gardens whence flew forth
Such deep sweet breathings of the tranquil earth.

8

Scarcely the gardener, old John Williamson,
Though his pipe drew well of a morning, and the gout
Forgot to twist his knuckles, could have known
Where were the little plots, nor found them out
For tending; gentle Emilia, she alone
Had planted them, and knew the paths about
Their secrecies, and came in summer eves
With water; and she loved their least of leaves.

9

Her gardens—how should any but herself
Number? or know the blossoms growing there?
Her pansies, each the quaint face of an elf
Lifting from shadow, whispering to faint air
Their faintest odor—on a sunny shelf
Of earth a live-oak's knotted knees upbear
Her gay verbenas, half ashamed to fret
With color-wealth pale-wanded mignonette,

10

That grew near by—her violets under a ledge
Where the hill cropped out with rock and downward slanted
Into rich crevices—and in the hedge
Her sweet-briar roses carefully transplanted:—
Sweet-william too she kept, that used to pledge
The breeze from cups of spice—her plots not wanted
Snowfall of sweet alyssum,—and had scope
For phlox and basil and dwarf heliotrope.

11

Like a young Goddess who with love requites
And nurture, the swung censers and sweet vows
Of worshippers and priests and acolytes,
She passed at twilight from the garrulous house
(Now that the yearning veiled autumnal nights
Set early in) and under obscure boughs
Swift darkness felt her all alone, not lonely,
Finding her charges by their fragrance only.

12

Autumn is not the rich and mournful close,
With us who dwell against the sunsetting,
Of the year, ere winter and the cerecloth snows
Enwind him, a pale slumberer until spring:
Here autumn is a traveller's brief repose
At heat of noon; he sleeps not; he will fling
The vine-leaves in a moment from his brow,
And run, refreshed with wine—for even now,

13

This side the nearest milestone, companied
By laughing shepherd Fauns who pipe the flocks
To fruitfulness, by wanton girls dove-eyed,
By that old kindly Satyr who still mocks
And loves too,—cometh she, the longed-for bride,
Even she above whose dark wet shining locks
Burns like a star the whole year's desire, even Spring,
Veiled in soft rain,—with joy, with blossoming.

14

This night it seemed to Emilia she was here
Already, though October had not rounded
His brother's late-born crescent, that swam clear
Of cloud in middle heaven; but clouds abounded
On all the wide circumference; nor could peer
More than four stars or five, and these confounded
Dizzily by the moon-rays that outmeasure
Her islanded estate of straitened azure.

15

"The night is warm, the rain will come to-night.
There is no wind but many clouds; all day
The sun threw doubtful beams, and milky white
Through mist on the blue bosom of the bay;
No dew is fallen at all; the air is light;
The ocean's tones are clear but far away.
O come, rain, come, sweet rain, fall softly and bring
To me and to my little flowers the spring!

16

"The hill-slopes are all gray and wait for you
To weave them lustrous robes of living green.
The trees grow faint with drinking the thin dew;
Leaves wrinkle, meagre limbs are bare between.
The sky is tired of being always blue.
The ways are deep with dust: O wash them clean!
And all my blossoms though well tended cry
Wistfully for the waters of the sky!"

17

Thus prayed Emilia, not with open lips,
But longingly at heart. For she was one
Who held to the ancient first apocalypse:
As the pure sons and daughters of the dawn
Prayed nor to images, nor fellowships
Of Godheads on a mountain, nor withdrawn
In heaven one God nor three; but worshipped rather
Kindlier powers,—the sun, their lofty father;

18

Deep-bosomed earth, their mother; and the wind,
The rain, the sheltering hills, the moving sea:
Even so Emilia, not with conscious mind,
I think, but by deep nature, reverently
Regarded the great elements, inclined
Her heart before the first—and verily
The only visible—Gods;—and found her prayer
As often answered as most others are.

19

But the fifth night it was. From set of sun
The gentle night was three hours old; the hearth
Nourished a blaze—no winter-crackling one—
Emilia's dear two sisters with their mirth
Were noisier. She, her evening tendance done,
And loved communion with the pensive earth,
Was joined with them. The sudden heavenly gift
Upon the window-panes a-pattering swift

20

Resounded: then the first-born of the three
Who sat within, laughed suddenly and said,
"At least to-night the boy won't visit me—
Francis, I mean: there's nothing stirs his dread
Like driving on wet roads, since the evening he
Skidded and toppled over. Now, instead
Of sitting two and two, for once we'll spend
The evening like three sisters—with no friend.

21

"Are you not glad, Emilia?" But that third
While Flavia spoke had vanished from the room.
"Where is the girl?—Where is she going?"—They heard
Down the long panelled hall the house-door boom,
Closing. They ran and opened: soft rain purred
On all the leaves without; through murmurous gloom
Faint perfume of untimely blossoms crept;
And in a haze of rain the garden slept.

22

They called; and when she answered not, returned
Wondering to the hearthside. In the night
Beneath the trees Emilia walked, and yearned
As solemnly as ever anchorite
To his high phantom-God: but *she* discerned
The God of her desire—for silvery-white,
Beating the long clear grass like one who danced,
Bacchanalian, silver-footed, gleamed and glanced

23

In the slant window-glimmer the sweet rain,
And hissed among the leaves, and pattered on
The ghostly gravel walks; and like a stain
Across the radiance of the moon was drawn
In luminous clouds; and failed; and fell again,
Wetting the tall-stemmed dahlias autumn-wan;
And from the eave-troughs with a gurgling sound
Gushed; and was sucked in by the thirsty ground.

24

What ails the maiden thus to walk afield
In the wet cold discomfortable dark?
The field-squirrel now is in his cave concealed,
Even in its driest depth; the meadowlark
Hugs what small cover a few wild mustards yield;
The fat wood-grub has burrowed under bark;
The slug finds shelter under a wet stone:
Why walks Emilia roofless, she alone?

25

Because she loves—because she worships—yea,
What can the maiden do and how express
More wholly her devotion? All astray
She casts her streaming hair; she will not less
Than give in gratitude her soul away
Unto the cool kind torrents: now her dress
Is loosened at the throat, and on her breast
Numberless silver kisses are impressed.

26

Now slip her garments backward—who can watch
In the wet night, and she well hidden behind
Her friendly trees?—she loosens the gold catch
Of the pin at her bosom; and the blind
Quick fingers of the raindrops, from the thatch
Of upper leaves wind-shaken, soon can find
And play upon her shoulders glistening bare
Between the mingled strands of her dark hair.

27

No eye is under all the darksome trees;
No step to frighten virgin modesty;
The world is housed: now, if the maiden please,
May she not walk and play conformably
To her desire and beauty? Piece by piece
Her raiment slips from off her, and with glee
Naked she stands, and free and without stain,
Mixing her tender body with the rain.

28

Anon she dances.—Thus a young doe-fawn,
One that has never known the stag, nor stood
Beneath his weight of love, about moon-dawn
Leaps in a lonely clearing of the wood
For love of her own lightness; far withdrawn
She dances in the mountain solitude;
Yet, should but a bird cry, how far she flees
Into the darkness of the taller trees!

The Vardens

In spring, when the young grass and wildflowers clothe
With color their clear forms, the yucca stands
In the wet world unflowering, a grim nest
Of spear-points from one center radiated,
Hateful to travellers. But when summer's glow
Has bared of their ephemeral bravery
The high forestless mountains burning in the south;
When only in cool of deep ravines is left
A little water, and green leaves beside it:
Then is the yuccas' flowering-time; they shoot
Heavenward the towering columns of their joy,
With whitest petals flaked;—from far they seem
Tall and clear candles on the mountain's flanks,
Toward the far peak advancing.
Thus may love
Withhold itself too long, and blossom at last
Hopeless, untimely; as that nest of thorns
In the arid season after spring is dead.

But Richard Varden from the first was froward,
Unmanageable; and all the more, because
Of that half perfect brother; and the pale
Faint-smiling beauty of his sister, doomed
To illness all her days. *His* cheek was bright
And sanguine through the sunburn; his gray eyes
Were wild and liberal as an ocean-wave;
Yet often rested on some weed of the earth
In sudden contemplation tenderly.

He in his fifteenth year forsook the house
That bred him up to boyhood; a brief quarrel
Concerning girls he walked with, and sweet wine
Illicit he had drunk, made wide the gulf
And separate the destinies. At dawn
The house awoke and Richard was not there;
Nor in the almond orchard was he found,
That reached up to the hill; nor where the olives
Drowsed with gray leaves under the morning heat;
Nor in the vineyard of the broad-leaved vines
Grown autumn-heavy. He had chosen a way
Far off; and Graham his brother, riding out
On the roan mare, had word of him last seen
Passing afoot the Santa Ynez wash
A long day's toil northwestward. Who returned
With no more tidings. Then the mother cried,
"O my poor boy! He has left us; and I know him,
He never will come back." But he that ruled
The house and farm, said gravely: "Never: unless
With penitent lips and most obedient will."
And Graham said nothing; but the sister wept
Bitterly; the pale girl yet scarcely grown
Out of her childhood; like a desolate child.

Above that farm near Santa Barbara
The swift years hurried; when Graham Varden turned
Backward his thought it seemed that the keen years
Had flown like buzzards soaring from the north
Over La Cumbre's top: so rapidly.
The vines that grew when Richard went away
Heavy toward autumn, purpled all their grapes
And gave them to the press; the young wine moved
In deep vats, and was barrelled, racked, and fined,

And slowly ripened in the cellars cool,
And made men merry at heart; the olive boughs
Twelve times let fall their rich maturity;
And Varden, the old man, the housefather,
Lay dying; for his old age had borne him down,
And pressed him—as a packhorse by his burden
Through quicksand at a treacherous river-ford—
So him his years pressed down into the grave.
Dying, he cried out for Richard. Lucy came,
Whom grief and weakness both made pale as snow.
"*You* are not Richard," moaned the old man. "*His* cheek
Is red and brown, but yours is dull and white,
Although your eyes are brightening." Graham approached
The bedside; his dark clothing and brown hair
Were gray with dust. "Not Richard!" cried the old man.
—"No, father: I am Graham, your elder boy.
I was about your business in the town
When word was brought me—" "It seems that you have been
Travelling: did you see Richard on the way?"
—"No, father."—"Then your journey was in vain."

With such farewells for his two faithful ones
The old spirit fled fast away; but did not find
Richard in the dim country and shadowy road
Which bodiless it wandered. But it saw
The little farm that lay at the mountain's foot
Dwindle below;—the vineyard, groves, and home
So long loved and inhabited so long.
For all grew dim, and fog rushed in between,
The ocean-fog of evening:—yet it saw
Graham Varden from the alien form that lay
So rigid on the bed, upraise his brow;
And Lucy cry in the corner. . . . Then it saw

The old woman that had been its body's wife,
Unnoticed until then, at the bed-foot
Lift her brown hands and bring them to her eyes.

The fog moved, and the death-chamber was veiled.
On one side lay the ocean vast and blank;
On the other stood the mountain; far below
The twinkling street of Santa Barbara
Waned like a moon; then the old man's ghost was blown
By the strong wind above La Cumbre's top
Into a desert; there it flickered out,
And sense, and that weak shadow of life, at once
Dissolved; and the great world that knew it not
Was emptied of a soul. But many such
This world retains, ever engendering more.

To annihilation and blank vacancy
Given up, the spirit was lost: its voice was left:
(For naked in the final agony
Man's soul is sometimes of its batlike voice
Most piercing and far heard)—the voice drove on,—
As when a star is blackened, yet its light
Rains on the earth for centuries to come
From the incalculable gulf and vast of heaven—
Drove north above the immense Tulare plain,
Blind messenger, crying "Richard!" Sierran heights,
Bare, and those hooded with perpetual snow,
It passed; and on the promontoried shore
Of Eagle Lake, remote in the northeast,
Fell; the deep night below Fredonyer Peak
Shook to its wistful cry. A young man woke
Beside his campfire's blackening ember-heap
And starting upright, stirred the ash; whose gleam

Shot ruby lights among the mirrored stars
Below, on the black crystal of the lake.

But he, that wandering man, in grief and awe
Wept silently before his lonely fire
Until pale dawn with light had slain the stars.

Maldrove

I climbed Old Baldy; and in coming down
Through San Antonio Canyon, stopped the night
With Peter Graham, my somewhat less than friend,
Who has a cottage near the road, and lives
Alone, with one man-servant, all year through.
Peter is old and ruddy and white-haired,
A jovial hermit, who professes more
Than feels, contempt of man and of the time.
"A dreadfully degenerate age," he said
At dinner; "and the stench of it comes up
The valley in the evening. Oversea
They are luckier; they have gunpowder to purge
Their breezes; they will live the cleaner for it.
You, meanwhile—you write verses!—But," he said,
"A better and a younger man than you
Sat in your chair last year about this time,
Slept in the bed you'll sleep in. Should have slept,
I ought to say, for he was up all night,—
I heard these planks creak with his regular steps,—
And heard him draw the latch and go away
A little before morning. On the floor
We found some papers after he was gone;
And on the hearth—" Graham paused; then earnestly,
"Oh no," he said, "believe me, your great poets,
Your Dante, Shakespeare, Shelley, are second-rate.
The great ones die unheard of; you'll be read
A year or so; but Maldrove—the boy's name—
Fell in a skirmish by the Dardanelles
(A special British blunder, God forgive them!)
Five months ago—unknown—the way he chose.

"I do believe he had written a great poem.
He had wandered our whole coast, and knew it well,
San Diego to Vancouver. All the forms
Of nature, every promontory and bay,
Mountain and valley and gorge and stand of trees,
And all our ways of human life, were grown
Into his heart, as if to finer soil
Transplanted with due care; and he had drawn
These, and the high wild creatures of his thought,
Into one organism, his poem,—burnt
On the hearth here. The night I spoke of, though,
He made a kind of dedication . . . rash,
Nervous, unfinished, . . . which I found next day
Tumbled about the floor. I have it here;
And you shall read it."

—In this wise it ran:—

I

Mother-country, O beautiful beyond
All power of passionate verse, or dream of mine,
Yet take this homeless verse; for it is thine
Prededicate, and doth to thee respond
With bitterness less bitter than the brine
That washes all thy west, and with despair
Less bleak than of thy mountain-summits bare.

II

But waters in the hollows of thy mountains,
In hidden woods that secret leaves seclude,
In sacred wayless heights of solitude,
Remember to be sweet; thy voice of fountains
Is music all year through; that music's mood,
Hidden too deep for feet of men to reach,
Makes verdure there, and in my heart makes speech.

III

This voice of speech if it be good, be gracious,
My country, and refuse not for all thine;
Seeing not as men remember and design
I have remembered and designed the spacious
Frame, and great forms to fill it, and divine
Breath to fulfil the forms; but as thou, divinest
Giant mother, rememberest and designest.

IV

Who shalt in due time, asking no God's leave,
Fill thy large frame with lovely and great sons,
Successors of these little and verminous ones,
Thy temporary fosterlings: believe,
O mother, and rejoice! That future atones,
Though future, for this present: yea, though it be
But a vision, for this instant infamy.

V

How shall I fall not from so hopeless hope?
How call it more than vision? Can the blast
And furnace of Fate spare it? Yet thou hast
Great stars and lordly in thy horoscope;
Nor the hours of their dominion can be past,
For they have never been; nor the years done,
Being yet unlighted by any cycle of sun.

VI

Is it next year thy people congregate
The world's to their fine festival?—to see
Thy wealth, and the opened inlets of thy sea;
And deal as those that love not thee but hate,
But furrow and spoil thee and make their vaunt of thee,
And call themselves thy lords: but I on hell
To attest I love them little, but thee well.

VII

O dreams, O more innumerable than sand,
Or salt flakes of the sea-froth driven and beaten
On sands the west wind and the north have smitten,
The southeast wind and the east wind from the land
Have piled with wilder dunes and fiercelier bitten
With seaward gullies—O visions of my dreaming,
Numberless as the sea-wrack tossed and streaming!

VIII

Much frailer than the sea-froth: O but sweeter,
O dreams, to me than honey from the hive!
Too sweet to endure, too beautiful to thrive
Beyond the kindly bonds of rhyming metre:
O dreams, O visions, it is you that drive
My heart through love's excess to excess of hate:
For those—are men; but you, O dreams, are great!

IX

Odi et amo! "Loving thee, I hate!"
The tenderest fieriest mouth of Roman song
Cried to his strumpet-goddess from the long
Passion, the wild desire, the vain regret,
Cried to his strumpet-goddess—Greater wrong
Urges who cries to men: For love of you
Hatred of all exceeds my love of few!

X

I call you all-abominable! Did she,
The wonderful strumpet-goddess, the all too sweet,
Defile herself with porters from the street
And slaves in the inner chamber? Let her be,
Nor cry at her, nor sniff at her: the feet
Of punishment are waiting at the doors—
O star of harlots, adorable of whores!

XI

I call you all-adorable, O men,
For the Gods' sakes you might be! What you are,
God knows I will not say—not God nor star,
God knows, nor honest nor clean clay! Again
With nostrils nipped adoring from afar
I do salute you for their worthier sakes
In whom your filth has blossomed, and awakes

XII

To flowers of beauty and courage and clear seeing,
To Achilles or to Shelley: as in her,
The strumpet-goddess found hateworthier
For love's sake, blossomed into lordlier being
Some flowers of beauty: else her worshipper
Had worshipped not, and Lesbia's name were just
As dumb to us as any sister-dust.

XIII

Nay, let her rest! One voice is fierce enough,
Her lover's own and tireless, to hunt down
That white sweet body, naked but the crown
Of shameful verse immortal, through the rough
Alleys and gutters of the eternal town:
Thou let her rest, my song, and let man rest,
And find thee what is better than his best.

XIV

O great hills of my country, thrones of death
Divine, and drought, and godlike solitude!
O terrible blue dome of the unsubdued
God, and the savage temple! O fierce breath
Of winds from the eastern deserts, or imbued
With wild salt odors from the western sea,
Or icy-keen from the higher infinity

XV

Of the upper, the all-irrespirable aether
That not your eagles, O my mountains, dare
Attempt: vainly the vans would whistle there,
Vainly through seeming vacancy; and neither
May soul of man attain that purest air,
Nor song of mine:—dear song! had we access
To that lustration of high loneliness!

XVI

There all the vermin infamies of men,
The many foulnesses, O song I love
I may not soil thy lips with mention of,
Might surely be forgotten; surely again
Thou and I might be white, and winged above
The turpitudes: as once, when I was young,
And thou, messenger of my heart, unsung.

XVII

Now thou art sung, and comest wide-winged flying
Full on the goal, my eagle of messengers,
My falcon of fair speech! What fool prefers
Long life and bitter, slow and painful dying?
Thou wiser choosest gladlier, not averse
From the instant immortality of fire
Violent and bright; the sudden kindled pyre

XVIII

Where thou in all thy beauty of briefest youth
Shalt fold both wings and droop each eager eyelid,
Dear singing-bird of keen and undefilèd
Plumage! and flee gay-hearted whither Truth
And Beauty are fled—out of the world! Thy smile hid
Too much contempt of man, and too much love
Toward stars he cannot bear the brightness of.

XIX

Therefore, O thou keen-hearted, rise from the ashen
Couch and the dusty grave, and do thou stand
Before the eternal spirit of this land,
And say in thy sweet voice: I am the passion
Of a young man, and come at his command
Who made me winged and fearless, fair and free,
That I might stand before thee and honor thee.

XX

And say: Not fashioned wholly of due disdain
Am I, nor wholly of hate though justified,
Thou seest, O mother! But of love and pride
Also, and keen desire, and bitter pain,
And of thy beauty, mother.—Let me abide
Here at thy feet, to await with quiet eyes
And folded wings thy supreme destinies.

The reading finished, I looked up; but said
Nothing. And Graham began: "No more than boy
Was Maldrove—twenty-two, or three, perhaps,—
And might have written worthily at length.
Only—this world—what is there in it to love
But unresponsive Nature?—He was then
Not old enough to clarify his dreams
Into a human image:—nor am I,
Old though I am: old, jolly and hopeless, I.
This cankered world, what is there in it to love?
A world at war is well enough—but this,
Rotting in peace—commerce—and for a hope
What but the socialism we're settling to,
Quotidian Sunday chicken, and free love
High over all, the spirit of hugger-mugger,
And cosmopolitan philanthropy
With wide wings waving blessing?
Maldrove went,
And killed, I hope, a brace of Turks, before
He dropped among the blundering Britons there;
Died, and is buried near Achilles' mound,
Under the herbless Hellespontine hills."

The Three Avilas

1

This west wind striking from the booming boughs
What tones the supreme harp-maker designs;
This roar of the ocean through our little house
Reverberant roof and wall; this roar of the pines
And high-pitched ripple of pine-needles, to rouse
Loud-slumbering Pan himself; this sun that shines
Inexpressibly clear, and wakes the wood
To other than its yesterday's weak mood;—

2

All the brave rustle and gleam of the world; the tameless
Pulse of music, rapture of light, have shaken
Me certainly from dreams and doubts and flameless
Sloth: I am nearly winged! and feel awaken
Visions and words long wandering lost and aimless,
Fires of dull nights, and pleasures unpartaken,
Or sleepily, of old: but now they flame
As were the very wind and sun in them!

3

Now I have courage to make song of this
Which makes my very life a song—your love:
That precious flower that edged the immense abyss:
That star, deathless, beautiful, hung above
The gulf of curded cloud: that blessedness
Unutterable:—what else for singing of
Has my weak voice? What else this hand that tries—
Vainly perhaps—to draw from the immortal skies

4

Light to make wise with brightness these dull pages,
The unhopeful blanks we write on? Yet behold
To me this happened, even for me did the ages
Pour into an aching heart their purest gold—
Their choice of molten gold!—the privileges
Of what but Gods being given to me to hold
In my poor hand and bosom—yea, but see—
Your love into my life, your lips to me!

5

Softly, my song, my heart! O softly, lowly,
Speak, and tread carefully underneath the stars,
Or jealous Gods awaken: O they are holy
And covetous, crafty and righteous: what debars
All beauty from completeness? What grows slowly
On every lovely child, and surely mars
His purest brow with evil lines, and strips—
Or death does first—the blossom from his lips?

6

What but the will of jealous Gods? And therefore
Tremble, not sing, my heart, for happiness!
And what thine inmost blood with crying makes prayer for
Beware thy lips betray not, nor confess
In hearing of shrewd ears; and if thou care for
The life of any loveliness, the less
Appear thou to regard it: huddle it, fold it
In mourning-cloth lest the wise sun behold it!

7

Number thy sorrows of old time, but tell
Thy happinesses never: rather say,
"Beneath yon pasture-oak I was miserable
For a thwart word; and such another day
Nearby the foaming surge that tripped and fell
In shelter of an oozy rock I lay,
And drunken with immoderate bitter, saw
The sea-mews hawking through the misty flaw."

8

Then think—for if we ponder long enough
On omens when the Gods are very good
It may be they'll avert them—think how tough
And ropy from the bottle, how like blood,
The wine was poured last night, the fumes thereof
Forgot their sleepy pleasantness and stood
Like thick fog in the veins and in the brain,
And choked the course of kindly sleep wtih pain,

9

And dreadful bodings of vain dreams; and after,
When we had slept until dawn should have come,
And dawn came not, nor any message-wafter
Warned the murk night with pallor nor faint hum
From eastward: what bird with a demon's laughter
Awaked the sodden wood, and then was dumb
A moment, and then wailed—until we thought
The night's black hunters had their quarry caught?

10

Last night was not the first that we had heard
That lamentable demon shriek in the murk
Beyond the pined ravine: no natural bird
Wails like an omen at such dreaming-work:
Nor spoke we of it; but my heart's heart stirred,
And sighed—awake, I knew: O fiends that lurk
On paths that wait our darkling feet, we knew
The terror of you and the voice of you!

11

Omens—why there are omens without number
For wakeful folk to tremble at in the dark.
Therefore beside our bed before we slumber
(Here in our cottage where the mossed pines mark
The wild world's end, and tangled slime-weeds cumber
The outer sea's beginning; the meadowlark
At drippings of the briny rock drinks deep)—
I hang my holstered weapon ere we sleep.

12

Fool—would I scare with gunpowder and lead
The phantoms that flock hither where earth verges
To chaos, and like gray fingers of the huge dead
Mists rake the high-spun foam of the eastering surges—
The phantoms that flock here about our bed?
The bitter, bitter cry that deathward urges
Those who look long at water? Or the pain—
Life's shepherd-dog—that nips us home again?

13

There is a healthless gorge we penetrate
Each evening, bringing driftwood from the beach
To glut our hearthstone: either way the great
High windy sanddunes north and southward reach,
Hardening to cliffs not blossom-desolate;
The tide-race with rare shells, the dunes are rich
With sand-verbena yellow and lavender,
The cliffs with blue beach-asters and the flare

14

Of ill-named paintbrushes, the vivid stalks
Whose upper leaves are tipped with quenchless flame
And unconsuming: everywhere one walks
Is all ablaze with more than I can name
Of miracles of blossom; the wind talks
In wooer's wise to each, and without blame
Filching from each her inmost spirit of scent,
Makes fragrant the universal element.

15

But in this gorge what fragrance? Here obscurely
The sapless rushes are at root corrupt
And poison the air; here never a wind flows purely
Over the stagnant pools, through juts abrupt
Of the red rock like fangs decayed; here surely
Canidia with Hecate has supped
Right often, and the nightshade here profuse
Has wreathed their writhen temples, and the loose

16

And bloated pods of that wind-chattering weed
Which maddens horses when they eat of it,
And dog-bane near at hand:—Dreamer, what need?
Is the ravine without a fictive wit
Not venomous enough? Yet here indeed,
Being weary with our driftwood loads, we sit
At evening, and the bats flit overhead,
And on the stagnant bank the reeds are dead.

17

Large toads across the slimy bottom creep,
And swim not, swollen too fat with marine worms;
The channel of the stream is choked and deep
With refuse of the raging winter storms
That into this foul nook for haven sweep
Seaweeds, and wood of shipwreck, and huge forms
Of twisted trunks and stumps, heaped half-afloat,
That come across the sandbar here and rot.

18

This is the place to think of when we'd try
To avert omens by much pondering them.
Here let us have our dreams more often lie
Than our tired selves, in hope to find the gem
Of future health in sickness; for the sky
Hereover only wears no anadem;
Lank exhalations from these oozy bars
Arise, and strangle the ever-living stars.

19

The sunsets that are clear and crystalline,
On floods of amber suckling Hesperus,
Watched from the beach, from high Point Lobos seen
Soft through pure mists have often pleasured us;
From Cypress Point the windy trunks between
They sparkle with wild lights tumultuous;
But gazed on from this westward-throated glen
Seem dull red wounds on foreheads of drowned men.

20

Can human sorrow taint an open valley?
Old passions rot the vale reeds ere they grow?
Thwart love bequeathe as on a notched wand's tally
Its record to the streams?—If that be so—
Where the armies of the newt and serpent rally
At the glen's head, remain from long ago
Reason enough and vestiges enough—
O ghosts, lie quiet! Bones of long dead love,

21

Lie still and stir not! while I quietly
Tell my deep heart's own sister, my desire
And dear delight, your living misery.
O sister of my heart, under that briar
Which only here grows flowerless, do you see
The mass of stone and mortar, slipped entire
From the steep bank above; the tumbled wall
That choked and turned the rivulet by its fall?

22

That ruin is remnant of a nest wherein
Two lovers dwelt, accurst from the first breath.
Four generations have been sown, and been
Reaped, with successive pangs of birth and death,
Since from the world those lovers brought their sin
And lodged it here:—as much of love and faith
As ever nourished goodness—as much joy—
Fed the grave passions of this girl and boy.

23

What was their crime? They loved too much; they drew
From the same parent-seed their sweeter lives.
But the boy, stranger-fostered, never knew
His year-younger twin-flower until connives
Time with blind Fate about the season new
When passion chiefly and most violently drives
The winged folk—and young hearts—then Time and Fate
Join these poor two, nor either knows what mate

24

Is chosen out of all the else-doomless world
For hers, and his, by those conspirators.
Two twigs bound in one fagot to be hurled
Into a fire's white heart and central force—
Two autumn leaves together swept and swirled
Toward the white falls adown a water-course—
Two birds one arrow pierces in mid-air—
Are not more surely doomed than these two were.

25

They loved; they could not give to take again.
They loved too much; too much to be dispraised
By wiser, cowardlier, less ill-fortuned men.
When the discovery came, and either gazed
On either, they beheld reflected pain,
But neither doubt nor fear, nothing amazed
Nor hesitant; they only knew that here
Their fate had spoken—yet their way was clear.

26

Men say that he, though Spanish of descent,
Was blond as morning, tall and azure-eyed.
In her more twilit cheek the rose was blent
With olive; and I think that either side
Her clear gray eyes, thick-lidded, somnolent,
The dark brown hair fell downward in such wide
And equal curves as yours has; and was bound
With double braids the little head around.

27

They travelled a long exile, and came hither
To the utter end of the world; and here unknown
Hoped to live out their love and lives, and wither
As in green shade two deer-bells, which alone
The forest wildbirds visit; they had neither
Converse nor clasp of hand with any one.
They lived like two stars burning in one blue—
If the whole huge heaven ensphered no more than two.

28

O, do you see in hardly alien fate
Our imaged own? We also are come from burning
The world behind us:—be it desolate,
Nor lurk back there to greet us unreturning!
My deep heart's dear one sister and lone mate,
Yes we would weep—but would we long go mourning—
Were it not also joy—if us like them
One tree had borne, twin-blossoms of one stem?

29

Here on the slope of this green hill, above
The glen that then was happy, they'd had built
By the Indians' unskilled hands to house their love
A rude and lovely nest: not then with silt,
With yellow rain-spilth of the dunes, and slough
Of woods and sea, as is with hidden guilt
A channel of clear thoughts, their brook was bound,
But flowed through shadow and shine with crystal sound,

30

Transparent silver, singing all night long
With virgin voice that answered the vast sea's;
A slender fearless thread of liquid song,
Bright piping to his boundless harmonies
From wildrose brakes, and the blue-misted throng
Of buckthorns, and the flowering currant-trees.
Also our lovers lined with hollyhocks
Their cabin pathway down to the clean rocks.

31

Except by one old Indian woman bringing
The daily food, they lived unvisited.
They heard, far off and faint, the Sabbath ringing
Of those Franciscan throats the friars had made,
The Mission bells, by loops of rawhide swinging
Within the domed one of two towers; they led
Nor hopes nor footsteps thither, never seen
Among the throng of worshippers within.

32

They looked beyond, as we have done so often,
Up to the Santa Lucian hills, and saw
The straw-brown slopes in middle winter soften
To sweet young urgent green; and when the flaw
Drew in from westward and white waves would roughen
Along Point Lobos, streaming mists would draw
As now, even so lustrous purities
Across their summits arching from the seas.

33

And brighter and more pure in the rude nest
On the hill's brow their passion burned supreme.
At night their eyelids closing for sweet rest
Would close upon the tears that burst and stream
When full desire has way: for unoppressed
By custom, and undulled their love would seem
By time, that dulls the great stars; nor laid by
The violent prime of its virginity.

34

And were they happy? Flaming heart, are we?
Life spoke in theirs as in all lovers' ears,
"This has to end, of course; but meanwhile be
Happy!" And if Marina wept her tears
Avila had his kisses: certainly
Where there are fools there will be loves and fears:
And where are man and woman are two fools:
And Time should cure us: he not even cools!

35

"Meanwhile be happy!" Meanwhile by what trace
What bloodhound was it tracked them all the way?
They had a brother, and his blood's disgrace
Cried out for blood; or so he thought; and day
Was darkness to him, and the sun's great face
A candle in a bladder, until his prey
Were earthed, and justice done: both family pride
And Christian faith commanded fratricide.

36

This drove him like a scourge from dreaming youth
And home by the Aztec mountain; he came up
Dark-burning from the midland east and south,
And coastwise crept, and raked the western slope.
But these, to whom each moon a silver mouth
Had seemed, bidding good-by,—began to hope,
Seeing moon from moon catch fire in summer's bosom,
That death was not of love the certain blossom.

37

An afternoon when the long year was ripe
And drunken with great suns, those lovers went
Down seaward hand in hand: the long-billed snipe
Knew and not fled their steps of slow descent
Customary; the killdeer did not pipe
A note the quicker; of one element
With their wild selves and the ocean and free air
Those wing-borne wanderers knew our lovers were.

38

Who sought, as was their wont in the hot days,
That little cove the cormorants love to haunt—
And we too—at the Promontory's base,
Well sheltered by enormous cliffs that slant
Southwestward, breaking the main seas; which raise
No foam-flags there, or seldom; but they pant
In long exhausted heavings, with low tones
Running among the small and rounded stones.

39

Here no man ever came except those two
Joined flowers whose deadly fading is at hand.
Here underneath a hollowed rock they drew
Their summer-clothing off, and down the strand
Walked through blue light to the much cooler blue.
She swayed in walking like a slender wand
Beneath her weight of hair; he with one arm
Held her, to keep the tender feet from harm.

40

Shy in the sun, untamed and beautiful,
Were they as the blue wave, but lovelier white.
They seemed two wild white deer come down to cool
Their autumn fever in the sea's delight.
O, hidden above the cliff what leering-dull
And viper-hateful eyes had impious sight
Of bodies so divine—is even more hard
And sour to tell than what was afterward.

41

He saw, and had no pity: save this one—
To kill first and not speak. He drew fair aim,
Resting his musket on some branch ill-grown
Of wind-blistered old pine; then deadly flame
Leaped from the gun-barrel and lighted on
That white boy's breast more bright than its own shame,
More white than any foam-flake of the west,
More loved than the Lord Christ, and more unblest.

42

For while the water kissed with azure kisses,
And cinctured with clear shadow at the waist
The milk-white column of Marina's blisses,
Avila had just turned to her, and faced
Toward her and shore; even then the scorpion hisses,
Fire-blown and leaden-bodied, in hot haste
To kill the most loved life God ever drew
About these shores and forests, until you.

43

Full-breasted, with a wide and open heart,
Ungroaning, he took death; whom ere he sank
Her arms held fast; yet from his lips apart
Some crimson drops that trickled the wave drank
Before her poor lips could; she did not start
Nor scream, but dragged him to the pebbled bank,
Panting, not sobbing; there she laid her sweet,
Where last weak ripples lapped his pallid feet.

44

There, careless of her shining nakedness,
Forgetting all but that her own was dead,
She bent above him, and with lorn caress
Touched, where no more was any fleck of red
To answer love, his flushless cheek; and less
Was on his lips; but where the small wound bled
She heaped and pressed her uncoiled hair; and stanched
The bleeding, now the very heart was blanched.

45

It seems not possible that any man,
And least of all that bloodhound, could be hard
And merciful enough to end her pain
The one remaining way! Yet when she had stared
Long on her dead, and knew him surely slain,
And raised the beauty of her body bared
To its full height of stature, and her arm
Through hair blood-darkened, clinging wet and warm

46

Against her breasts and shoulders to her thighs;
And stood by the lone shore of the low sea,
A marble grief, too desolate for cries,
Too desperate for tears:—even then did he
Take second aim: and his unblinded eyes
Are proof that no God cares for what may be
Of horrible, or out of reason, done
Below the foolish looks of the wide sun!

47

She died; then with her slayer a kind of sense
Of kindred had its way, so that he wept.
(To which effect we have for evidence
His holograph confession the Church kept
First here and then in Monterey, and thence
Took southward, times being troublous.) Then he crept
Down the steep blossomy cliff, this tearful slayer,
And knelt astrand and mumbled a brief prayer.

48

Which said, as Noah's praiseworthy two sons
Walked backward toward their father drunk-asleep
And naked, so did he over the stones
Go stumbling backward toward the shining heap
Of limbs yet beautiful, that more than once
Had burned with so much love; now fathom-deep
Beyond desire, beyond burning, beyond breath,
In the inexpressive drunkenness of death.

49

Touched by the water, in a sunny place,
Among the small round pebbles and beach boulders
Those dead lay close entwined; and he, with face
Averted, peeping sometimes o'er his shoulders
To see his way but not their loveliness,
Unloosed his dyed *serape's* silver holders,
And, without looking, with one backward sweep,
Flung it above the two there laid asleep.

50

Thus having somewhat clothed their shame, he made
A couch of grasses by the cliff's descent,
Beyond the sway of tides, and thereon laid
His brother and his sister; and then went
Hastily to the Mission church, and said
What he had done, and wherefore, and the event,
All to the first-met priest; who issued hurried
Command, and had those lovers brought and buried.

51

But whether near the Latin-magicked plot
Obscene with hundreds mouldering there, or whether
In some remoter and more decent spot
Well consecrated by the sun and weather,
Their dust has vanished, is recorded not.
But of the house wherein they dwelt together
The wood was burned, and the uninflammable stone
With special care was broken and pulled down.

52

"In order"—runs a postscript clerkly penned
To that confession—"that nor sight nor thought
Of so unspeakable wickedness offend
Lord Jesus, nor the (alas!) yet hardly taught
Rude Indian people.—What we could not mend
We have made vanish." Thus the parchment brought
To benediction, ends as suddenly
As two sweet lives down by the autumn sea.

53

Now we are here; and where they loved, we love;
And where they died we sit at evenfall
To watch the sunset wither, far above
The sea-cliff's dark and cormorant-haunted wall.
O, there is much that scarce bears thinking of,
It fades so soon—and changes not at all.
Another race, another tongue: but then
The old sobbing yearning hearts of the same men!

54

Thus dark and bitter ends the bridal song
I meant to make for you: thus let it end!
Those that most love will suffer the most wrong—
We know. For to love well is to contend
With Gods vengeful and envious. O be strong,
My lover, my heart's sister, my one friend!
Be strong, seeing Life's crown-jewels remain these three—
To have strength, and to love much, and to be free.

55

But as for us, let us forget to fear,
Some brief permitted while, those vengeances.
The woods and shore yet shelter us; and here
Where the world ends in waves and silences
We may be quite as joyful as the clear
Small blossoms of the beach and wilderness;
Those lamps whose light is perfume, which they scatter
Profuse on the wide air and the pale water.

Ruth Alison

Two waters of the Santa Lucian hills,
Beautiful streams, were named in the elder tongue
The southern rivers: *el Sur Chiquito* one;
The larger and more southern *el Sur Grande.*
These elder names our later language turns
Into the Little River, and Big Sur.
Most beautiful both streams; and both to me,
In memory of the day when first beheld,
Are sacred waters.
Of the larger one
I speak. Under the awful shade immense
It runs, of immemorial redwood boughs
That downward writhe from the columnar trunks;
Trunks that by girth and noblest height, and form
Uncouth, suddenly tapering at the peak,
Recall to mind the giant world, and growths
Exorbitant, that rose from watery soil
Into the fume and rush of monstrous heavens
Ere man was born on earth—so huge they are.
Below them the fair current darkly flows,
By dappling chance of sun made beautiful
And grace of its own ripples. As the vale
Widens, it widens too, more open now
To daylight and the visitings of the wind;
And now as from a fugitive enlarged
The darkening redwood forests draw themselves
A little backward, peopling either side
The low slope of the hills; and on the bank
Few cedar trees and many sycamores

Diffuse their kindly fragrances above
The flashing shallows and the clear green pools.

Thus after many miles of smooth descent
The river gains enlargement uttermost
Of ocean and salt waves. Midway its course
Within that wooded valley, and from thence
To the flat lands against the ocean-gulf,
Lie several farms, weak inroads of few men
Amid the imperturbable majesty
Of the old forest. Alison's of these
Not largest yet was loveliest, for it lay
About the river's westward bend, and where
A dozen rivulets danced into the stream.
They threaded the small pasture as with pearls,
And warbled ever in the nearby grove
Notes like the lowest of a meadowlark's
And mellowest, mixed with rushing liquid noise
That slipped from stone to stone. Ruth Alison,
The farmer's daughter, loved to hear their voice.
A lovely, shy, dove-throated maid she was;
Blond as the honey that her father stored
From hives with white sage pastured; of her years
Not past fourteen, yet grown to height and form
Of womanhood among the favoring hills.

O fortunate was her inheritance
More than of wealth or lordly name! She heard
The rivulets and the river past her home
Go murmuring noon and night; she watched at eve
The golden-jewelled phantoms of the sky
With seasonal change above the redwood tops
Wheel westward their great arcs, from month to month

Even as from hour to hour seeking the west
And haunts deep-hidden beyond the ocean-plain.
Or in wet winter yet more wonderful
Were the long mists and gray scarfs of the rain,
When all the brooding sky, though stars were none,
Shone on the darkness, full of secret light
As the comb is of honey; and bent down
To touch the trees; nay, mix with them, and make
Their summits into darker clouds, that stood
Motionless, while the others moved among them.
Nor thus alone did heaven intangible
Before her very eyes and in her heart
Prove itself whole with earth: a warbler's tune
Throbbed from the water-footed alder-group
Sufficiently might bridge that facile gulf.
Nor, feeling such communion, felt she less
Her own with both of those: unworded ever—
Well nigh unthought of, as too deep for thought—
These feelings were, this knowledge. One who dwells
In the great woods or on the oceanside,
Not strayed by much acquaintance, labors not
To bring into the paltry light of speech
The movements of the soul. Of song I speak not;
For song may treat nobly of noble moods.
Rare are the gifts of song, and many feel
Truths that alone the poet can word, and he
Not well, nor in full substance. For the rest
I hold it greatly better to be mute
Than speak ignobly, as the manner is
Of the anthill populace, whose every mood
Must froth at surface easily into words.

Yet did Ruth lack not for companionship
Of more articulate—closer could not be—
Than with the waters and the cloudy trees
And valley ferns and flowers. Her father indeed—
Great head and beard of russet streaked with white,
Thick-woven, tremulous with age, wherethrough
But nose and eyes were seen; an aquiline curve
That; and the eyes large, tranquil, hazel clear,
Shy like a gentle beastie's, or Pan's own
When favorable—he, fond of stream and field,
Was like those other comrades taciturn
And loveworthy; her mother had more words,
Yet loveworthy; so Ruth was not alone.
And she had had brothers and sisters five,
Herself the youngest; but of those who lived
Two dwelt in San Francisco, and one watched
Australian herds, one mined Alaskan quartz.

One more there was of men whom Ruth held dear,
A young man; and her mother smiled upon him.
For he was pleasant to be seen and heard,
Tall, and of mettle and strength to mount and rule
The wildest pony of the hill-pastures.
Nor did Ruth's mother smile the less because
Paul Hayworth was the Widow Hayworth's son,
And of her thousand acres by the sea
And of her pastures and her valley-farms
Heir with his brothers. Ruth deemed little of this,
But liked him well, and when he rode each day
To visit her, would greet him gladly; and soon
Answered his words of love so lovingly
That all the valley knew they were betrothed.

Now, his maternal lands being widely flung,
An orchard here, a pasture there, and tilth
On the far side of the hills along the sea,
And many laborers to be watched, Paul found
Less than he wished of time to be with Ruth.
And even at the best Ruth's mother often,
Bustling with irksome hospitality,
Came in between their converse: therefore soon
They chose a more convenient trysting-place
Than the small farmhouse with its flapping doors.
A redwood tree it was; hollow with age,
Giant of girth, and highest of all the trees
That flourished in that valley. There they met
Each day a little; or if it could not be
Paul would ride over ere the sun arose
To leave within the hollow of the huge trunk
Word that he could not come, and of his love.
Which Ruth would read, and kiss the paper, and wish
The sun gone down and risen on a new day.
And when he thus was absent, or had come
And gone again too soon, she rarely failed
To honey the tough bark of the old tree
With her sweet lips, and pressure of hands and breast,
Saying, "Good old trunk, my faithful! Do not think
Because I love him I have forgotten you.
No, never will I; nor your sapling kin,
Nor any of you all that guard my life
And look upon my love."—For thus to her
It seemed, that if the beauty of the trees
Were taken from her, life and love alike
Must wither in hard sun, two satin-bells
Fallen, delicatest, or two bronze fritillaries.

Vast of its height that trunk o'ertopped the wood;
Into its hollow an archway led, with brown
Deep-folding bark encrusted; and within
A round tower-chamber opened, or a high
Chapel, to the divinity of the wood
Long-dedicate: upon its rich brown floor
Two half-lights laid their shadows; from the low
And narrow archway one; one from above,
From high and most immeasurably high—
It seemed to whosoever stood within—
Even from a little window that looked forth
High in the narrowing trunk, above the heads
And shadows of the forest roundabout.
In such a chapel, not without strange awe
Standing, did gentle Ruth and her beloved
Make sacred vows; here mouth to mouth, and breast
To lovely bosom pressing, they grew whole
In strong desire, one being that erst were twain.
Yet such the innocence and power and awe
Of holiest beauty, that the man forbore
As if a naked sword had lain between;
Trembled within himself, tortured himself
Even to the heart, and virgin Ruth remained.
So beauty holiest and divine desire
Contended to the profitless event.

This redwood in the corner farthest north
Stood of Ruth's father's holding; from the house
A quarter mile, and from the stream withdrawn,
Yet in full hearing of it, and near that road
Which winds over high hills, through canyons deep,
And by the booming shore and promontories,
The forty miles northward to Monterey.
By the same road a half hour's gallop north,

Or less when Paul was riding, lay the farm,
Paul's home; the farmhouse witnessed its own age,
The central part as the olden manner was
Being built of square-hewn logs and chinked with mud;
But this had since been panelled all within;
And now from that rude core two wings were grown,
Each greater than its origin, nor framed
Of logs, but of sawn timber bright with paint
Olive and green, so that the dwelling stood
Distinguished in that country, and far seen
Above its well-pruned orchard-drifts of white
And rows of blackberry vines with blossom on them.

For now it was the entering in of May,
And all the country blithe with blossom. Now,
The rains being over, every week-end night
Was dancing and the wail of violins
At Hanlon's place. From Manvil's lumber camp,
And from the lime-kiln on the Mill Creek hills,
Men came; and many ranchers roundabout,
Or ranchers' sons, with joy forgathered there
To celebrate the term of a week's toil.

Paul thither begging Ruth to dance with him
Not eagerly she heard. To dance alone
In the deep wood or by the dimpling water
Was pleasant; yet the movements of her heart
Loved not a general mirth; she had no full joy
In that which makes the life of many maids—
Or spoils it, rather. Little and poor the spirit
That most enjoys when least it is alone.
The noble and pure spirit is in itself
Immense enough to be a multitude,

And needs no outward. It may pour its all
In friendship or in love, all, all of itself;
It grudges even a scruple of itself
To babble and mixture muddling heart and brain.

Ruth grudged, and gave to love what love desired,
Grudging no whit for love's sake. At the time
When lingeringly above the hilltop wood
Across the river day's last radiance leans
In latter spring, though sundown lacks an hour
For those who on the ocean headlands dwell,—
Came Paul, driving two horses of his best,
Two grays perfectly mated, mare and foal,
Quick walkers on the climb, and sure of foot
To gallop down; wide-nostrilled too they were,
With slender legs, no fetlocks, and great throats.
Ruth's father had none such. Forward they leaped;
And ere the girl could greet it with her eyes
That mighty redwood the loved trysting-place
Was passed; and near the river with arched necks
The horses ran, pounding the road to rhythm
Of married hoof-beats beautiful to hear.
"They are better under saddle than in harness.
The mare," Paul said, naming them, "shall be yours
When we are wed, for she is quieter;
The gelding mine. We shall ride often, Ruth.
They were my mother's gift to me last year,
My twenty-first."—"They are beautiful," Ruth said.

And now they left the river, and now climbed
The hill with rapid steps. The hilltop gained,
Before them, rosy above the valley-mist,
Shone, all his limestone height one glow of even,

Tall Pico Blanco opposite the sun.
Ruth on the mountain fixed her gaze, and felt
The heart o'erflowing within her; but Paul's look
Gave on the next hill-ridge, whereover gleamed
White apple blossom and his mother's house.

Before the driveway entrance Paul drew rein;
And, while his horses tossed their heads, and breath
Like smoke came from their nostrils on the cool
And flush of even, he said, "Let us go in
To see my mother: we have time to spare,
Dearest." They entered, and she came to meet them,
Folding the lace mantilla round her head.
For she, by her marriage though of English name,
Hayworth, yet stemmed from the colonial blood
That held the land before, and filled the land
With saints' names and the warble of Latin vowels.
All Spanish hers, no Indian intermingling;
Therefore her eyes though brown were lighter of hue
Than usual in the race; and taller she,
And courtlier; saying, "Ah, you will dance, my Ruth?
—But beautiful she is, so fair, so slender—
Is she not, Pablo? Hair more pale than gold,
True honey color, Pablo." And again
To Ruth, when they had entered the house-door:
"I think you do not love to dance, my dear;
You go to please the boy: then please him well,
Or others may well please him. Laugh, be gay!
We are hard to hold, we Aleras; but are held
Worth holding, we." Thus did she speak, and laughed.
But Ruth, a little frightened, turned her face
To Paul, not answering. So a man, who dreads
Some danger on his lonely path, at night,

When feebly wanes through cloud a watery moon,—
If the close bushes crackle he does not peer
Into the dark, but eyes his faithful dog
Trotting before him within touch of hand.
Thus Ruth; and Paul answered her with a smile,
As meaning, "Have no fear: we are bound too close
In love and understanding." Yet she did
Tremble a little; and the world of men
Seemed large and homeless to her, and all unlike
The faithful wood and narrower world she knew.

When from the lighted house they issued,—lo,
Swift evening in a moment, as it seemed,
Had fallen, and ways were dark; that limestone peak
Gleamed pallidly; the road fell off downhill
By swift hoofs beaten and ringing wheels; and thus—
As an owl that has hung above a wood
In airy gyres of starlight hour by hour,
But now beholds her prey, the tender leaves
Nibbling of cress or clover, and she falls
All at one rush into the trees and through them—
Thus into the deep midnight of the trees
They plunged from the high hill; along the road
Was heard the murmuring of the Little River.
Here seemed the air stagnant and icy cold
Like to profoundest waveless ocean-depths;
For neither those through the azure opaque above
Does the sun warm, nor can he ever gaze
Into this gorge through the dim vast and green
Of undeciduous foliage layer on layer,
Star-proof, clothing the columns of the wood.
And now above the rush of hoofs and wheels
Shrill sound was heard at pulsant intervals;

To such great distance the sonorous wood
Carried the high notes of the fiddle; the lower
And mellower all were lost; and thus it seemed
A weird and dangerous music in a dream,
Compulsive, not melodious. In a dream
Ruth deemed herself; and when the lights appeared
Of Hanlon's place, she waked.
A platform stood,
Ringed with great paper lanterns purple and red,
Beside the creek and in full forest; and here
The dancers danced. Men from the lumber camp,
Men from the lime-kiln in the Mill Creek hills,
Men from the lonely heights and valley farms:
And with the men what women? These had brought
Their wives, and those their sweethearts; and a few
Being both were neither. Merrily squealed the fiddles;
And the stream murmured low, the august trees
Stood all about, and some fantastically
Were tricked with lanterns for this festival.
Near to the platform was a cabin built,
Which seemed a larger lantern, so aglow
The doorway and the windows were; and here
Liquor was sold, hot, acrid, biting the blood,
Wakening the joyous devil in a man.

Now after Paul had danced with Ruth two rounds
On the foot-shaken platform, and the cry
Ceased, of the strident violins, one came,
A young man of the city, who in these hills
Had dwelt a twelvemonth for his weakness' sake
And ailing of his lungs. Being known to Paul,
He spoke to him, huskily as his wont.
Whom greeting, Paul made Ruth's name known; and Ruth,

Unwilling, liking not the sickness in him,
Danced with him a third round, for so it seemed
Paul wished; and in another's arms did Paul.
A second young man came; with this one too
It was Ruth's lot to dance not willingly,
In the wild lights, under the solemn trees,
Hearing the wind among them, and the water
Below them, and the strident violins.
She turned her head in dancing, then she saw
Paul with a woman habited like the sun
In azure silk and golden jewels; and when
This woman's head below the lantern light
Passed, it was dark but lovely; full of pride
It seemed, and full of joy: the black hair shone,
Diamonded, and curled in sudden waves
To the white throat; and the arms were white and bare,
Slender, and on the wrist a bracelet glowed.
Ruth asked her partner, taming the dislike
She had of him: who answered: "She? The wife
Of Leonard Manvil."—"Manvil?" Ruth replied.
—"Manvil who owns the lumber camp down yonder
At Manvil's Landing, where the ships come in."
—"She is like a swan," thought Ruth within herself,
"That flies in mere proud littleness of heart
Among the wild ducks. Fly to your own, great swan!
Trouble us not with pride, but let us be."
And Ruth, having no guile in her, nor wont
Of masking and the social farce that hides
The social being from its own consciousness—
Ruth, when the music and her dancing-partner
Ceased troubling her, ere Paul approached to claim,
Ran from the circle of light into the wood.
There, sitting on the wet bank of the stream,

Her arm on a great root, her forehead lying
Upon her arm, and all her honeyed hair
Dishevelled even to the earth, soiling itself,
She felt slow tear-drops trickle on her arm
And thence into the water. Meanwhile wailed
The fiddles, flickered the lights, the dance went on.

Paul sought her soon, and found her, comforted her,
Laughing a little at her folly, and said—
"Dear, if you love not dancing we will go."
And all his heart was drawn to her the more
Because she had wept. Had some one breathed ill words,
Or looked askance? Or had she been afraid
Among so many people? She replied
That she had wept merely from loneliness;
She knew not why she had wept. And now she sobbed,
But happily; and so he brought her home.

The next day early waked Ruth Alison,
And all the night was a faded dream.
But through her little chamber-window, low,
Caught in with honeysuckle and clematis,
She heard the rivulets murmuring, and the river
Laugh at her evening folly as Paul had done.
And from the window gazing—all in white,
Barefoot she was, warm from the tossed white bed,
And on her shoulders lay in two thick braids
Her honey-colored weight of maiden hair—
She saw in the pearl-gray of early dawn
The redwood tops against the reddening sky
So tall, so great, so earnest, that it seemed
No one could use her ill, no one betray,
No failure spoil her happiness—her own;

And all her fears were folly; and the night
Departed, trailing westward the dark hill.

But she whose beauty when she danced with Paul
Had startled Ruth to tears, awoke meanwhile
And moved within her wider bed. She lay
Northward as far from that strange dancing-ground
As Ruth lived southward; near the ocean she,
Above the sea-cliff; and the ocean's voice
Murmured along the bases of the rocks.
Could she not sleep? She had no will as yet
To waken. Then she looked upon his face
Who next her lay, her husband's, dull asleep;
A face not beautiful, though manly enough;
Not old; but worn lately with haggard lines;
A weary brow. Moving in bed, and yet
Not much, lest he be wakened, Manvil's wife
Within her wakeful heart remembered all
The freak had brought her hither.
For at first,
When Manvil bought the forest-lands, and schemed
Over a chart, here should the roads be run;
And here the ships would moor, off the high cliff,
The water being deep enough, and take
Their lading from the cables and the cranes;
And here at the cliff's edge the shingle-mill
Would stand; and with his pencil drew a line
To fence the houses that should cluster it
For the laborers to dwell in—cottages
To house the married, and a building broad,
Three-storied, capable of many beds,
For all the single men:—"But where," he said,
"Shall ours be built—which cottage will you choose?

For we must be there often." Then she had laughed,
Answering, "You will be there when you must.
Not I: the city does me well enough.
I—on that harsh coast, under the windy hills?
I could not live there, not one day, my dear!"
Then Manvil,—he indeed could master men
Often, but not a woman, not his wife—
He begged forgiveness even for the wrong
Done to her beauty in thought to exile it
From that it loved—the city—where it flowered.
He drew the fence and framed the shingle-mill
And raised the cottages to cluster it,
And in the midst that building gaunt and broad,
Three-storied, capable of many beds.
All this had been five years ago, and more;
But she had never seen the place; though he
Must see it some four months of every year,
And see to its working, and the timber hauled
From deep hill-valleys.
How the ocean boomed
At daybreak on the bases of the rocks!

Was it last week or was it yesterday
She had laughed out with a sudden whim, and said,
"Leonard: since you are going I will go
With you, and see these businesses of yours
That steal you from me six months at a time."
Thus had she come; she had been here three days,
And heard through morning clouds the shingle-mill
Trumpet its brazen-throated column of steam,
Calling to labor (but to-day it would not,
Being Sunday). She had watched the draught-horses
Whiten their collars and round quivering flanks

With odorous foam, dragging huge logs downhill;
And seen the tall trunks reel against the cloud,
Axe-bitten, and cumber the valley with their fall;
And seen the desolated glens below,
Dotted with stumps, and some few scraggy trees
Left standing, as unworthy of the axe.
For all about the mill and up the streams
Was desolation; only the upper glens
Remained yet to be spoiled; and now indeed
There was more tan-bark brought than redwood trunks
To Manvil's Landing, and the hungry ships
That anchored under cliff. By wagon loads
Incessant from the hills the tan-bark came,
And the stripped oaks rotted where they were felled.

But now her thoughts flew wide, and now they paused
Upon the dance visited yesternight;
A revel uncouth—interesting—a sport
To talk of to her friends at her return.
"A tribe of Corybantic savages"—
She phrased the tale in her own mind. —"And yet,
Friends? Have I friends? Who is my friend up there?
—A tribe of Corybantic savages,
Inflamed with vicious drink and animal heat,
Dancing by flarelight in a gully.—One
Was amiable enough," she thought.
But now
Men moved without; her husband woke; they dressed.
And after they had breakfasted she said,
"Who was the boy I danced with, the handsome one,
A trifle Spanish, though his eyes were blue?
Black-haired: Haywood, was that his name?"—"Hayworth,"
He answered. "His old mother has more land

Than I can own and lease. All south of here,
On the two rivers and the coast below.
And vigilant too: my men cut tan-bark now
On the Reserve, and no one wiser. Hers
We touch not or we'd pay for it—*her* trees."
—"Is she so wealthy?" said the woman.—"Well,
She has land enough," he answered negligently.
"Sole heir of the old Alera Ranch, and since
Has widened it."—"A pretty boy," she said,
"For all the Spanish in him"; and they passed
Out of the house and walked on the high cliff.
It were mere folly to tell all the tale.
A million lives like these riot and mix
About the world, and none keeps record of them.
So on a mountain-flank the rainy grass
Is new in January and lost in June,
And none keeps record of it: the blind hearts
Of men likewise renew themselves and die.

She made occasion; he was glad to yield.
He had heard it called a jest and thought a glory
To love outside the law; and glad to yield
He was, and thought the yielding wholly hers.
She wept indeed; some ice in woman's heart
Thaws, when she thinks her act is wickedest,
In thin tears, on the verge of joy. A fool,
Not worse, we hold her: who of women or men
Has power to be aught worse—of those at least
That measure life but in the vulgar terms
Of passion—and amusement—and they die?

Others die other deaths. Manvil's perhaps
Was nobler; for his wife being his no more

He had not much left to work for. She had been
So long his pilot-star—his beautiful—
For all men worship beauty in some wise—
That when she left him the stars were dead to him.
Yet he would not have died; but Government,
That justly indignant God, waxed hot against him
For tan-oaks on the public lands despoiled
Of bark, bare trunks, rotting where they were felled.
Therefore—he would have slept in prison else,
With shame and loss beyond his power to bear—
He ended, a revolver in his mouth.

But Ruth—O sovereign Nature of the trees,
Quiet and long-enduring—of the streams,
Eternally refreshed, clear-flowing and new—
O mighty Mother of more than life—for thou
Hauntest the barren eminences of hills
Where no life lives but of the fruitless grass;
And on the peaks beyond of glimmering stone
Makest thy habitation; and far up
In lifeless wingless heaven unfoldest all
Thy spirit of power, whether in the azure noon,
Or at the many-colored ends of day,
Or on the abysm of darkness, populous
With hosts innumerable of infinite light:—
O mighty Mother, comfort thy poor child!
She also is a part of all that is;
And lo, except thou help her, she remains
Desolate.

For each day Ruth Alison
Ran early to that hollow redwood tree,
Giant of girth, and highest of all the trees
That flourished in her valley. Thither came

Paul too, and she rejoiced to be with him.
Then for some days he failed her; and she came,
And was alone, and went away alone.
But the fourth day he came. "O Paul," she said,
"Why have you failed me?" And he lied, and said:
"My mother wanted stores from Monterey
And sent me for them. I was there two days,
Bargaining, and I came again last night."

Then once again he failed her for three days.
And when he came he cried, "O Ruth, I am man,
Not angel! I have been a traitor to you,
I have played the fool, I have lied, wasted myself:
And yet, whatever comes of it, I swear
I love you only, Ruth, you evermore
To the pale end of life and after dark."
She clung to him, she wept, pardoning all,
All—all—she knew not what—much more than all:
He could not stay, but like a man afraid
Unclasped her arms that clung to him, kissed once
Her forehead, under the hair, above the tears,
And caught his horse, and mounting fled away.
She, prone on the dry mouldering forest-slough
That masked the old tree's hidden roots, could hear
The hoof-beats of his horse: they waned and ceased
Far off; the murmuring river came between,
And like a bird a rivulet sang close by.

O Ruth, was it indeed so hard to bear?
Was it impossible, poor child, to bear it?
Let the elder and the strong, hearts all of iron,
Hammered by Fate with iron and frequent strokes,
Harden themselves in wisdom and live on.

So eager and so beautiful a child
Might well be tender too: was hers a face
For sorrow to make spoil of? Hers indeed
Was a mild heart easily to be bruised,
Not long-enduring, soft and flowerlike sweet.

She came each morning to the redwood tree
Vainly; each evening she returned in vain,
And always paler. Yet it is not said
She perished of this grief; but sure it is
That ere the brown bees filled their autumn cells
From the late lupine blossoms, ere the rain
Freshened October nights, Ruth failed to come
To the tall tree; and ere much rain was fallen
Her flowerlike body fell into the earth.
Men dream large dreams of life beyond this world:
For her dear sake I wish them true. O God,
Can it be possible so fair a spirit
Passed, and no remnant left? We must have strength
Both to love beauty and to love the truth
Equally. Let no more be said than this—
Had he been faithful she would have been most happy,
Being of her nature beautiful, and bound
To the great nature of that lonely place
In harmony: most happy she would have been.
He had no faith; but now she suffers not.
She is calm, being dead; and the huge trees are calm;
And the vast ocean, though his countenance
Be vexed with storm, is very calm at heart.

That following winter there were many storms,
And trees uprooted. Thrice the thunder roared
Right over the fair vale where Ruth had lived,

With sharp and awful voices. The third morn
Ruth's father went forth, sorrowing as his wont,
To gaze on the swoll'n river; but returned
Before his wont, shaken with grief, and said,
"Our daughter's redwood has been broken, Mother."
She came, and they two, weeping, looked upon
The wreck of broad limbs shattered, and the huge trunk
Split in four fragments even to its base,
All prone among the ruins of lesser growth.

The next year at this place were saplings grown
From the ancient root; but not after their kind
Of green and joyous leafage. White were these,
Wax-white, with no least hint of kindly green.
Whether the lightning at one stroke had changed
The inmost natural essence of their sap,
Drawing the color from it, I cannot say.
The simple people of the countryside,
Liking to dream into more visible form
The doubtless bond that links all beings with all,
Imagine that the foliage thus grew white
Feeling the maiden's grief: her tree it was,
Her trysting-place; and he that passes there
May even now behold in the deep wood
That leafage, under shadow of loftier boughs
All shining white, a marvel in the wood.

Close by, the Big Sur River murmuring flows.
And if you pass northward, and cross the hills,
And cross the Little River, and Mill Creek too,
Then you will see on the bleak ocean-cliff,
Under bare windy hills, a settlement
Of cottages about one building, broad,

Three-storied, capable of many beds;
And thereby an old mill. These vacant stand,
All; and the grass will hardly grow between them,
And there is hardly a tree for miles around.

Dorothy Atwell

Under the hill-range windy and high
That walls the coast from wave to sky
Between Point Lobos and Point Sur,
Dorothy Atwell, five years old,
With sunny eyes and hair of gold,
Lived in a ranchhouse low and poor.

There she was born: a place too wild
And desolate for such a child
To grow to girlhood happily,
The world would think; and so do I.
Nothing is there but hill and sky
And voices of the vast flat sea.

A poet, who would put away
The mingled color of every day
To live one-minded, calm, and still,
And ponder a world simplified,
Might choose the place,—so very wide
The sea, so very bare the hill!

Yet, as the poet would soon perceive
The passions and the powers that live
Within those large and simple things,
Even so the child, and even more:—
To stand within her father's door
Thrilled her with wondrous wanderings.

She loved to watch the sombre boughs
Of cypresses before the house,

Which the wind worried like a hound;
And the storm broke them every year,
But still in strife they lived, and were
The only trees for miles around.

She heard the cries of men who drove
Their cattle in the hills; her love
At other times would fix upon
Some tiny dooryard flower than leaned
Low down to earth under the wind
And scarcely dared to eye the sun.

And she had terrors too: with cloud
The hill's vast head was often bowed
As by a weight too great to bear;
The sun was gone, the sky was black;
It seemed the heights must groan, must break,
Under the burden of thick air.

The mighty motions of the sea
Brought her much joy; they grew to be
So fearful too that oft she wept.
Her mother then must lay the care
Of the household by, and comfort her
With song until her sorrow slept.

This little maid's great pleasure was
To watch the mail-stage daily pass
With its two horses and their driver.
Mondays it came from Monterey,
And Tuesdays northward took its way,
Returning from the Big Sur River.

Of the two horses one was white;
This one was Dorothy's delight,
So tall he was, and trotted high.
The other, like her father's own,
Was but an ordinary brown,
Less pleasing to the childish eye.

Small Dorothy would often wait
For hours beside the driveway gate
Until they came; once, laughingly,
The driver lifted her, to pat
The white's long velvet nose;—and that
Was a great day for Dorothy!

But soon appeared a darker day
Of strange confusion and dismay.
For at the hour when mostly passed
The stage, the driver came alone,
A man disastrous, woe-begone,
And panting hard, and running fast.

"Where is your father?" From the shed
Her father coming, the man said,
"Fetch ropes, and help! My team is gone
Over the cliff!" And ropes in haste
They found, and up the road they raced,
And Dorothy was left alone.

She heard the tale her father told
That evening—how the wagon rolled
Over the rocks into the sea.
Hanlon (the driver's name) had seen

The earliest white globe-tulips lean
Above the road; and eagerly

Dismounting from the seat to pluck
Their fragile beauty, by ill luck
On the brake-lever he had looped
His reins; the wagon then was standing
Where the steep grade from Manvil's Landing
Edges the cliff; the rock is scooped

Below; and when the horses lowered
Their heads to crop green herbage, toward
The sea, and brink of that abyss,
They slipped the brake; the wagon lunged
Forward; the frightened horses plunged
Headforemost down the precipice.

"Their necks were broken," Atwell said.
"The brown one in the waves lay dead;
We saw it rolling back and forth
Under the cliff upon the rocks;
And gulls were gathered there in flocks,
Wheeling from the south and north."

—"But the white horse?" said Dorothy.
"The white one:—him we could not see.
He must have got into the caves
At the cliff's foot: they often draw
Seaweed and driftwood down. We saw
The brown one rolling in the waves."

To Dorothy the white had seemed
Strange always, like a creature dreamed,

Or told of in a fairy-book;
And now his disappearance lay
Strange on her mind; he had gone away
Into the caves; and one might look

Forever, and not see again
The tossing of his long white mane,
The lifting of his hard white feet.
The brown, though dead, was in the waves;
But this one in the secret caves
Had gone to what obscure retreat!

This fancy so her mind possessed
She could not listen to the rest
That by her father then was spoken:
How they had climbed with ropes, and got
The mail-sacks from the surf, but not
Anything else, for all was broken.

This fancy still so heavily lay
Upon her heart that when, next day,
The stage came, a new wagon, drawn
By other horses,—then it seemed
The white was also there, and gleamed
Ahead of them, and led them on.

But daily, and each day the same,
The new stage passing by, became
Familiar; and more rarely seen
That phantom leader white and tall
Soon faded from her thoughts, and all
Appeared as it had always been.

Below the hill, below the house,
Under the sea-cliff's misty brows,
There is a narrow beach of sand;
No smaller shingle well could be;
Yet smooth it is, and fronts the sea,
Closed with huge rocks on either hand.

Thither, when summer days began,
The little maiden often ran,
And like a sandpiper would flit
Along the foam's edge many an hour,
Or mould the sand in mound or tower,
And gather it and scatter it.

There seaweed red and brown and blue,
Or mottled, or of mingled hue,
Made glad and bright her curious eyes,
And shells, of tint yet vivider,
And those that most delighted her,
In color and form like butterflies.

There by her mother's knee she played
One day, when suddenly afraid,
She cried, "O mother! the white horse
Is swimming to us from his cave!"
Her mother looked: it was a wave
Breaking with more than usual force

On the low sand; and swift and tall
It moved, and white with foam was all
Its hollow front; and curled, and broke.
"See, it's a wave," the mother said.

And Dorothy was still afraid,
But not another word she spoke.

A later day she watched the sea,
Mute, a long while, and finally
Said, "Mother dear, what does it want?
What is it crying for? It seems
To reach for something in its dreams,
And like a dog it seems to pant."

October came, the loud south blew,
Foreboding showers, but still with dew
At dawn the sun-bleached grass was bright.
A half-moon waning in mid-sky
Showed broken vapors thin and high
Northward rushing o'er the night.

The cypress boughs were bent and thinned,
The ocean roared under the wind,
The house-walls creaked; and Dorothy
Cried in her sleep, then waking cried.
Her mother rose, and by her side
Standing, she heard the roar of the sea.

"What ails you, child?"—"He comes too near
In darkness, mother; I cannot bear
To have him gallop round and round!
I often tremble in my bed
Because I hear him neigh," she said,
"And feel his hoof-beat shake the ground."

—"You hear the waves that never are still,
You feel the wind shaking the hill,

And nothing more," her mother said.
"Now sleep, as a good girl should do;
Nothing will hurt nor waken you,
And I will sit beside your bed

"A little while, and sing you a song."
—"Mother," she answered, "is it wrong
To be afraid? I know the sea
And the wind, I hear them every day:
But—I should like to have you stay
Beside the bed, and sing to me."

—"Down the white daisy
Nestled in grass
When the wind was loud.
The wind is crazy,
Puffing a cloud;
The wind is crazy,
But the wind will pass.
Blustering, blustering,
Over my nest
Deep in the grass.

"Laughed the white daisy,
Here will I rest,
Deep in the grass,
Deep in the nest.
Let him bluster and blow:
Do I care, do I care?
He is cold in the air,
I am warm and low;
Warm and low
I rest.

"Rest, little daughter." The low strain
Was hummed a second time, and then
The mother tip-toed quietly
Away; and murmured half asleep,
Hearing the wind howl in from the deep,
"Sleep, little daughter Dorothy."

Who slept; but often all that year
Would wake in the night and wail for fear;
And even while the sunlight shone
Was rarely happy as of old:—
So pitiful it seemed and cold
In the deep caves to dwell alone

She thought that horses of all food
Like barley best: barley she strewed
Upon the beach below the hill,
And wisps of hay she scattered there:
Next morning all the beach was bare;
And Dorothy was pleased, and still

Was full of pity. In the night
She pitied while she feared—so white
The horse had been, so beautiful!
This passion still renewed made weak
The unfoldings of her youth; her cheek
Grew pale, her azure eyes grew dull.

The strong will thrive on bitter food
And simplest; nothing is not good
For the most strong: but for a child—
A spirit unformed and all to be—

That world of only hill and sea
Might prove too simple and too wild.

Too much of chaos in a glance,
Too terrible significance
In each quotidian act and sight:
Even for the full-grown man must be—
If he can feel, if he can see—
A danger in that infinite.

If toward the land you look, on high
Stands the hill, and over it the sky,
And nothing further can be seen.
If oceanward, no form is there
But the skyline clear, the earthline bare,
The hard blue sea a band between.

The hard blue sea: but down beneath
At the cliff's foot it seemed to breathe;
It slid white fingers of long spray
Among the rocks; it moaned and panted;
Something it lacked, something it wanted,
Begged for and sought for night and day.

Dorothy knew not what it sought:
Of her most precious thing she thought,
Her own small painted chair, and went
Tottering with too great a burthen
Across the road, and down the earthen
Slope, and the stairlike rock-descent.

She waded on the hard wet beach
Until the foam-swirls' chill could reach

Up to her knees; and there she laid
On the retreating wave her treasure,
The small red chair, her chiefest pleasure,
The painted chair her father had made.

"Dear beautiful white horse," prayed she,—
For in her mind the rush of the sea
And the white horse were grown to one—
"Dear horse, I have brought the best I have
To make you happy in your cave
Although you cannot see the sun."

Then terror seized her, and she fled
Homeward; that night she mourned in bed
The too-accepted sacrifice.
Her parents questioned her in vain,
And pondered late, nor guessed what pain
Subdued the childhood in her eyes.

Before the long year turned its ring
Back to the blossom-time of spring
Wee Dorothy was fallen ill;
She wasted with a fever slow,
And still when the wind was heard to blow
Cried that his hoof-beat shook the hill!

What end had been of her distress
I cannot say, I dare not guess.
She might have grown at weary length
Of days, insensitive to all
Influences that please or appall;
She might have conquered—a child's strength

Being more than we divine—the fear
And pity which tormented her;
Or in eventual madness known
The forms her fever trafficked in,—
The phantoms;—or sole priestess been
Of a religion all her own.

But Fate ruled better; for the man
Her father, seeing her ever wan
Except at night in fever's hold;
Her blue eyes often wet, and growing
Dim with a shadow past his knowing;
And her voice dull, her small hands cold;—

He sold, in hope to do her good,
His land:—too much a solitude
It seemed for one so young and frail.
Inland they journeyed; when the sea
Vanished, right glad was Dorothy;
With every mile she grew less pale.

Forgetting that sea-solitude,
Growing up to lovely womanhood,
In a high Maderan valley shines
The golden head of Dorothy;
The sunlight glances there with glee
Between the wheatlands and the vines.

The Old Farmer

(The small farm described here is about two miles north of the Big Sur postoffice. Its owner, who was known as the best bee-man of the neighborhood, sold it in his old age and went to the city, to live with his son. Eventually—out of pure homesickness, it would seem—he committed suicide.)

With my own hands my little house
I built below the redwood boughs
    Beside the Big Sur River.
With my own hands I split the shakes,
And laid the rain-tight roof; my axe
Rang all day in the deep wood
To make a clearing where it stood.

I drew a fence, and trained in lines
My blackberry and raspberry vines;
    And eastward of the river,
Where there were but few trees, I cut
The rest, and in that sunny spot
Planted an orchard:—who will waste
The fruit that I shall never taste?

Above the rich dark river-silt
A dike of logs and stones I built
    To hold the flooding river;
And still from dawn-gray to night-gloom
I toiled, and made a narrow flume
Of hollowed redwood stems, to yield
Water for my alfalfa field.

And on the hill where thick white sage
Makes plentiful bee-pasturage
    Above the shadowed river
I set the white hives close together,
Carefully; and in late spring weather
What joy, what joy I had to hear
My honey-gatherers humming clear!

To think of it will bring me harm:
Why did I leave my little farm
    Beside the friendly river?
It is not good for me to think
How flamed upon the water-brink,
Wet-leaved from winter's earliest showers,
The autumn-golden sycamores.

Nor of the solid redwood bank
Behind:—the deer came down and drank,
    Their forehoofs in the river;
And grazed on the cress-bordered lawn
Below the sycamores at dawn;
And at the moonrise I could hear—
Could see them, if the night was clear.

Like towers of the giant days
The close-branched redwoods in the haze
    Above the sliding river
Stood up at twilight; they would seem
To overlook the stars, if beam
Of any star could pierce the high
Soft vapors of that shining sky.

Here the sky never shines so much,
And there are few green things to touch.
    O! does my lovely river
Laugh ever as it used to do?
And run the deep green shadows through,
And ripple on low stones, and make
Behind the ocean-bar a lake?

It was eight miles of valley-land
Down to the sea-mouth and the sand,
    Following the river.
I walked it last to get the pay
For my poor farm. . . . A holiday
My life has been since then—and yet
I often grow so tired of it!

My son is very good to me
Here in the town; I ought to be
    Glad to have left my river.
I see it in my dreams; I hear
Its music murmuring in my ear;
I am so old and white and weak
I often think my heart will break.

At Lindsay's Cabin

Here, by the nameless little brook that runs
With no more rustle than a gliding snake
Among its cresses, Lindsay often used
To sit all day and gaze upon the brook,
Or the dark redwoods, or a moving cloud.
At other times he wandered lone the hills
Into the farther wood. Yonder you see,
Mossed over, and the roof fallen in with age,
The cabin that he built with his own hands—
Or hut: it seems to melt into the hill
Naturally; as fourteen years ago
It grew and had its being: for no squared beam
Was built into it, no sawn plank nor lath,
But redwood split according to the grain
In shakes and slabs. There Lindsay dwelt; and those
Who passed would often wonder what he thought
All the long days, and how his time was spent.
He kept no cattle, and he tilled no soil
Except one little garden of few herbs;
He owned nor horse, nor orchard, nor a hive
To care for, and but rarely talked with man.
Hanlon, who drove the mail from Monterey,
Knew most about him: by what meat he lived
Knew, for he brought it to him; and that he read
Believed, for he had brought a case of books,
Both large and heavy, from the town.—And yet
Lindsay had not so much as turned a leaf
Since they were come; he read, perhaps, the brook,
Or the green redwoods, or a moving cloud.
Steep, as you see, above his cabin home

Rise the two hills each way from the ravine,
With weight of redwoods overhung; and here
The sun but rarely enters; yonder, though,
Where on a low stone by the rivulet
He often used to sit, yonder the sun
Pours fullest radiance all the afternoon
If heaven be clear; for south and west the hills
And trees are gapped; and yellow grow the weeds
In summer by the brookside, glittering flows
The brook among its cresses and tall ferns.
Not out of hatred of the race of men
Did Lindsay dwell alone; kindly he was;
So Carlos Black might witness, were he here.
For Black, who worked at Manvil's shingle-mill,
Mishandled once the blocks;—from the elbow down
His arm was mangled by the whirling saw.
His wife, who nursed three children, nursed him too;
Then, for he could not work, and wages lacked,
The household lacked for bread; but Lindsay came—
Hanlon had told him of it—and helped the house
More than with alms. Food he provided; rest
He brought the toiling woman; for *he* toiled,
Scrubbed, set the house in order, cooked the food,
Tended the torn flesh with clean bandages;
And, when a fever took the man, he held him
By strength of hand; by strength of hand he forced
The broth between his teeth; and Carlos Black
Lived: but with money Lindsay lent him after,
Went north; he tills his farm in Oregon,
A man content, and capable of toil.
Lindsay went back to his cabin, and would sit
Daylong beside the brook, or day and night
Wander the distant canyons and dark hills,

A solitary man. Three years he lived
Here, in this fashion. At the third year's end,
A matter, people judged, of some concern
Called him to San Francisco. It was thought
In brief while he'd return;—two years went by
Before he did; and he who had gone away
Straight-shouldered, middle-aged, in prime of strength,
Returned old, weak, full of mortality,
A weary head, with more white hair than gray.

The tale of his misfortune is not known
Fully; he never spoke of it; but one
Who had helped him in his travel, passing here,
Told some of it, and men conjecture more.

For when he reached the city—(it is said
The errand regarded certain property
Invested, wherewithal he sparely lived)—
The city reached, the business looked into,
Yet incomplete until the second day,
He felt a sudden faintness at the heart
Among so many people: multitudes
They moved the streets, an endless aimless throng,
As in a broken anthill scurry the ants,
And seem to have no aim, but everywhere
In multitudinous confusion mingled
Stream through the little, close, and earthy ways:
Even thus they swarmed the city, and Lindsay felt
That none among so many destinies
Could be of moment, seeing so many they were,
So mixed and all-inextricable.—But when
Evening was fallen, and hardly could one see
The stars of heaven, so many and bright the lamps,

An endless aimless glitter: then indeed
The fancy grew more strange, the crowd was merged
Into one being unformable and huge,
A monster of convulsive breath, a life
Alien to man though all composed of men,
Unfriendly, menacing, fearfully alive.
Thus too the forest with its million trees
Had merged into one being the while he watched,
Sitting beside the brook on the low stone;
But this had never been unkindly, this
Though alien never dreadful. Lindsay groaned
To be back yonder where the rivers run,
And men are few,—thence individual souls,
And often like the hills in dignity.

Afraid of his own fear he sought the draught
Which makes the healthful healthfully rejoice
If moderately, and calms the uncomforted;
But should there lie a poison at the heart,—
Unwisdom, illness, baseness,—wakening that,
Oft makes the man go mad in walking sleep.

This man's ill fancies were a poison to him:—
O, to how many others those have been
Poisonous, and the atmosphere of towns
Been pestilential! Not the feeble in chief
Fall victim to it; often the free, the best,
Men full of generous blood: such Lindsay was
Through all the austerity of lonely days.

He drank; and he was gladdened; that ill dream
Vanished; and men he spoke with seemed once more
Men, not mere atoms of the monstrous beast.

He dreaded lest the dream in sleep return,
And knew not when he slept—or his mind slept,
The body moving still.
He awoke, and heard
Creakings, and murmur of water, and a voice
That thundered on his dream. The sails were spread;
The morning wind blew right abaft, the sea
Rippled immeasurably from wave to wave,
Bright gold on azure; under the eastern sun
Far yellow hills pierced a faint line of fog.

Then Lindsay from his mates learned bitter news.
The ship was English, bound for Liverpool
Through the Magellan Straits. And *he* was bound,
He, with the ship. He had come aboard last night,
Like a corpse, carried in men's hands, and yet
Had somehow signed the paper binding him.
Here, with a deep laugh from the hair-grown chest,
A mighty-shouldered seaman spoke the word,
Shanghaied,—a word which echoed night and day
Like shame in Lindsay's ears; yet he endured.

Strength to desire the best, and strength to endure
Albeit the worst: these both are in man's heart
Borne:—happy is he who but the first of these
Knows and requires: and yet not miserable,
Not wholly miserable must he be named
Whom the other and the sadder power supports.
Lindsay endured and failed not; all that day
Performed his work, although with hands unskilled,
Hands in such toil unpractised, quick to bleed.
That evening late, flickered, a low earth-star,
The light which marks Point Pinos, westernmost

Horn of the Monterey Peninsula.
He saw it; he dared not think, who yet must feel,
How in the dark the tall peninsular pines
Move, sighing, below the myriad gleam of stars;
How on the cliff; gaunt forms above the gray
Of infinite ocean, gleam the cypresses.
O from thence on, with yearning heart, and eyes
Most desolate, he shoreward gazing knew
Albeit unseen the Santa Lucian hills,
Which in the north tall pines, and southerly
The mightier redwoods mass with living depth
Of shadow and sweet odor: it was this
That mastered him, and made unwilling eyes
Wet, while he gazed; this thought of leafy air,
And the rare smell of cedars by the stream,
And the all-enfolding sweet and subtle breath
Of redwood boughs, blown from deep canyons up
Over the windy ridges of dark hills.

An hour before the dawn he wakeful saw
The home-light flash—that beacon of Point Sur
Set in the westward forehead of the rock.
Then, longing like an agony came upon him
To leap over the side and strike for shore
And liberty and home. Death had been his
In those wide waves, under the infinite stars;
And this he knew. Death, a perpetual loss:
The present but a season's or a year's:
Too long—he yet at length would turn again
Home: but from death is no returning home.

What storms encountered cannot profit now
To tell, nor what half desperate weeks of calm

Retarded the slow voyage. Yet port at length
Was gained; but Lindsay ere that day, though still
He labored with the rest and did his part,
Was fallen sick; and when he came ashore
Lay five weeks near to death, within which time
The wages of his bondage were all spent.
And then what long delays withheld him there,
A penniless man and friendless, ere in time
He gathered help and money from afar,
Need not be told. After long lapse of hope
He sailed at length, and homeward, and came home.

It is avouched by those who witnessed it
That when by the mail-stage from Monterey
He rode again,—not strong as once he was,
But weak and old, full of mortality,—
Seeing, up the creek of San José, the first
Of redwoods flourish, like a child he wept,
A little child who has wandered and been lost,
And then its mother finds it. He, white-haired,
Thus wept, and all had pity on him. He lived
Five years thereafter in the cabin here,
And here he was found dead, a day in spring.

I think his life was largely fortunate.
Useless, you say? Man, what is man to judge
Of use and unuse? Are the weeds that grow
Deep in the dark abysms of the eyeless wave,
Yielding the fish no pasture,—are the flowers
No wildbird ever saw, so buried they are
In deep green hollows of the ancient wood—
Are therefore these unuseful?—Man to man
Being helpful is of worth, yet man to man

Is not the whole—perhaps is the least part
Of the infinite interrelation of all being.
This man, as others love a woman, he
His chosen valley. Look! For I believe
His love hath made it the more beautiful.

The Mill Creek Farm

Don't close the window; open it wide: there's a touch
Of frost in the air, I know; but not so much
That you need to shut me in from the noise of the stream.

I've heard it these forty-three years through waking and dream,
Winter and summer; I'll hear it a short while more.
But you, if you're cold,—that coonskin coat by the door—
I shan't need it again; if I should, you might wear it the same.
A good kind girl you've been to me, dear; you won't blame
My old whims, Katie; I couldn't be happy without
The noise of the creek—You're turning it inside out:
Fool girl! I can't help you. Well; so you've gotten it on,
And are warm enough now, I hope. I said to my John,
"She's a good girl, John, and pretty, a joy to the sight,
But a fool girl, John."—He'd have you, though. He was right;
And lucky to get you: lucky for me, you think,
What with the pills to take and the doses to drink,
That I've one of my kin to nurse me; and you so kind.
But it's easy enough to die when you make up your mind.
I could die alone; it would save us trouble, my dear;
But I'm glad that you married John; and I'm glad you're here.

Listen! The creek's alive and laughing to-night,
Tumbling over its pebbles.
Turn down the light,
Will you, Katie? or lower the lamp-shade: there.
Soon as my eyes undazzle after the glare
Maybe I'll get one look at a couple of stars
Over the buck-eyes, under the window-bars.
It's a clear night, isn't it, Katie? And winter; yes;

Drawing the bolt for January. I guess
The Northern Cross should be yonder, left of the hill,
Northwestward, over the valley-mouth. Look, if you will.
I can see the bright star of the top. The Dipper, you know,
Is down in the north, it will rise in three hours or so,
And stand like a giant, straight up, with its foot on the crest,
Where the wagon-road crosses the ridge. My window looks
west;
The Dipper will rise, but I never shall see it again.

Katie: you're used to the town, I know; but then
You're too young to be set in your ways:—it'll do no harm,
My asking . . . whether you think you could keep the farm?

Well, dear, it doesn't matter. It's yours when I die,
If you like it or not. You'll sell it: I know who'll buy.
The Widow Hayworth has wanted it thirty year—
Don't sell too cheap; take time and bargain, my dear—
Thirty year:—she'll have it in thirty-one,
And the stars will rise the same, and the creek will run,
And the buck-eyes leaf, and the orchard blossom, and all.
—Dead or alive it'll run; summer and fall,
Morning and night.—The creek, what else?—It roars
In spring like an ocean under the sycamores.
In summer it ripples and tinkles from rock to rock,
Feeling for shade. But now—you can hear it talk
Like a woman, laugh like a child, sing like a bird,
Now in the winter; the forty-third that I've heard
Its music run to the sea; and the last one, too.

Katie, you needn't to cry; you're a fool if you do.
Fool girl, I always said it.
What's that?—In heaven?—

A place for children to plan for; *I'm* eighty-seven.
You'll know, when you get to be tired and sleepy and white,
That the only word at the end is plain Good-night.

I've done some good in the world: I built the road
Over the hill, where to-morrow the stage with its load
Will joggle and climb; and the next day down at full trot.
To-morrow maybe I'll hear it pass; but not
Day-after-to-morrow. I built the road; and I built
The dam that gave me four acres of river-silt,
And feed for the cows; and I planted the orchard below.

Then, Katie, the hives to care for: five in a row,
Six rows; and the eight new stands. You'll watch when they
swarm. . . .
—For a minute I dreamed you were going to keep the farm,
Katie; but now I remember. Well . . . let it be.

The Widow has thousands of acres; a wise one, she;
Flat land, wonderful grazing, down by the coast;
And still she crawls up the creeks. She's a mortgage on most
Of Cauldwell's ranch; and she closed Will Hanlon out:
The last eight years she's belted me all about;
And run her line-fence over the hill both ways.
Now she can pull it down. Her steers will graze
From the tide-flats up the creek to the door of the house,
And crop green apples in August from the orchard boughs.

Well, Katie, it can't be helped. They're all of them gone,
Bob and Henry and David,—the last was John;
And you're but a fool of a girl, and the creek runs on.

Queer that a man's four boys must die, and the land
Fall from their father's into the stranger's hand!
I thought of that when I visited you in town,
Katie, and saw the people run up and down,
Trotting the streets; and young fellows busy with work
Not fit for a man to put hand to: waiter and clerk,
Poolroom loafer and barroom lapper: I thought,
Will the blessèd country end like me, be caught
At the break-up time, when the world turns upside down,
With her sons all gone and rotted away in town?
Not a man with strength to keep hold of the beautiful land,
And the stranger's hulls off-shore, and the stranger's hand
Reaching up to the mountains.
A damnable dream
To go to sleep with: better the noise of the stream.

But I can't . . . Can you hear it, Katie? What's wrong? The creek
Seems to have stopped . . . maybe I'm getting too weak
For hearing it now.
Don't be a fool, Kate. . . . What?
—You think I shall hear John's voice—when I can't hear *that!*

The Belled Doe

—A waterfall
Hung never wavering from the mountain wall,
So windless was the vale: a thread of fleece
Much longer than the tallest cedar trees,
Or the dark-tufted beauty of any fir,
The waterfall appeared; calm whisperer
Of music all night long and all the day.
Below that precipice the plowland lay,
Crossed by the brook; the lowly vine-grown house
Was under broad twin oaks, but orchard boughs
Heavy with ripening apples folded it.

I have never seen a more immured retreat;
The unbroken hills all round were deeply grown
With ancient forest: one tall peak alone—
San Gabriel's—was far visible above
The girdling heights. It was a place to love;
And in my memory perhaps appears
Yet lovelier than it was: for many years
Are vanished since the kindly man who tilled
In the deep valley that enchanted field,
Told me in homelier, fewer and better words
Than I can use, this tale:
—The fledgling birds
Are flown before we know it (he said); and then
It does no good to wish them home again.
You'd never think, to see us living here,
Us two alone together, year on year,
We'd had six girls and boys; and every one
Grew up here, and the last of them is gone.

O, they write often:—all but Charles; for he
Has lived too long somewhere beyond the sea,
And maybe has forgotten us. The last
Was Barbara; three years and more are past
Since she was here. For now having a home
And babies of her own, she cannot come
To visit us so often as before.

But we are sorry that we hear no more
Her tame doe in the mountains. Barbara
Was just eighteen when out Dark Canyon way,
At foot of Sister Elsie Peak, I found
A little orphan fawn on the black ground
Under a fernbrake lying. The mother doe
Had been shot by some scoundrel—(for you know
That does are guarded by the forest law)—
And on the low leaves of the ferns I saw
A trail of darkened blood. The fawn was lying
Half-starved, and made a pitiful faint crying
When I came near; and struggled once to rise,
But could not; and it watched me with wild eyes.

I carried it, so light it was and weak,
To a ranch over on Tujunga Creek,
Where they had Jerseys pastured; and it soon
Learned to take milk in driblets from a spoon.
And though I had to leave it there, in ten
Or eleven days I went for it again
And brought it home. Our Barbara loved it so
That when it grew to be a sleek young doe,
And pined for freedom, round its throat I hung
A small brass cow-bell with a noisy tongue
To warn the hunters off. It used to roam

The mountains all night long, and yet would come
Home to our cabin often; and it played
With Barbara like a tame lamb unafraid.
I had to fence the garden-patch, and yet
Never could keep it out.
One evening late,
When in the summer heat we'd left our door
Wide open, it stepped in, as oft before,
Jingling its bell. But in the shade without
I saw another one that moved about
Just on the edge of light.
The doe had brought
Her mate avisiting; but quick as thought
When we'd have looked at him the stag was gone.
Then the doe came less often. Very soon
Barbara too had found her mate; and we
Were left here quite alone. I used to see
Sometimes in the early morning Barbara's doe
Along the brookside; but it seemed to know
That Barbara was gone. Its bell would sound;
It would not come; but with a leap and bound
Be off into the forest. Lonely men
Have heard its bell above Pacoima glen;
And summer campers where the West Fork runs
Into San Gabriel River saw it once.
But in the chaparral of Strawberry Peak
It was both seen and heard; and where the creek
Drops down through Devil's Canyon. Bob Devore,
The ranger, was on duty there, before
He went to Foxbrook Flats, and brought us word
In passing. But the pretty sound was heard
No more after a year; we could not tell
Whether the thong had broken and the bell

Been lost among the mountains; or astray
Our daughter's pet had wandered far away.
—We hope it did not come to any harm.

Thus he made end of speech.
Upon his farm
Below the mountain-peak and lofty trees
There breathed, I thought, an air of the innocent peace
That does appear forgotten; but is not
All perished, in a world thus vexed and hot,
And full of stabs unlooked for, and fierce toil.

O traffickers and chiefs, that share the spoil,
And reap wide swaths of glory in far lands,
Having taken up Earth's battles into your hands,—
You also Earth has need of; you requires
Fate, that upon the fume of your desires
Is fed, and waxes mightily:—but yet,
Brief rulers, I would have you not forget
The old dignity of him that drives the plow
Through crumbling furrows deep, when morning's brow
Flames in the orient world; and him that broods
Memory of an old love under the simple woods.

Descriptive Songs and Others

A Westward Beach

I

There is a narrow lonely beach
    Beyond the promontory,
And there alone the tall pines reach
    To where the surf is hoary
On worn red rocks and ochre sand;
At the starved limits of the land,
Feeling the outer foam, they stand.

Our thrawn peninsular cypresses
    Are fitlier formed for striving
With storm and famine and the stress
    Of salty vapors driving;
Yet I have never seen them wedge
Their roots—this pine-grove's privilege—
Through wet rocks to the water's edge.

At morn the shadows of the pines
    Float on the turbulent water;
But just at sunset the long lines
    Of rising breakers scatter
A liquid shade, translucent, dim,
On every lower bough or stem
That in the morning shadowed *them*.

But when the earnest ecstasy
    Of cloudless noon possesses
The cliff, the shore, the prostrate sea,
    And with such light oppresses
The world that every form is blent,

And every color, sound, or scent,
Into one ardent element:

Then are these pinetrees great; they stand
    Self-authorized, unshifting,
From the lone verge of sea and land
    Their sunlit spires uplifting.
They live so hard, they fare so ill,
Their prosperous noontide finds them still
Austere and unsubduable.

II

Under these pines an autumn day
    From dawn to darkness lingering,
The waves above the reefs at play
    And in the crannies fingering
I watched, and weighed my narrow sense
With all the mute intelligence
Of natures old, remote, immense.

I cannot pass a dog or horse
    Without some form of greeting;
Glance catches glance, as if of course
    To celebrate our meeting;
And I am joyful with the birds;
We know each other without words,
Life to life so well accords.

But friendship with the living trees
    Is something deeper, rarer;
Word, glance and gesture fail; there is
    A subtler message-bearer.

My love beneath the bark can glide
And mix with the green life inside;
And, though deceived, is justified.

Deceived—but how deceived? I know
    What I have felt—how often
Have felt the baby branches grow,
    The buds unfold and soften,
The eager sap in springtime clear
Whisper below the bark, my ear
Against the wrinkled bark to hear.

III

Happy whose spirit of wisest thought
    Can share the deep emotion
Of woods and hills, whose heart has caught
    The rhythm of the infinite ocean,
To whom this earth not alien is,
Who with the stars hath sympathies,—
Happy is he; great joys are his.

Add yet, O dear maternal Earth,
    A human loving-kindness,
A sympathy with mortal mirth
    And tears and wants and blindness;—
Add these, that so thy child may be
Entire, as he is glad and free,—
A poet full-souled and worthy of thee.

He walks obscure; few know, few care
    What stone or turf or pillow
Will rest his head to-night; or where.

Below the rolling billow
He might rest well in waters dim,
And sea-flowers twine each passive limb:
Only three hearts would grieve for him.

—And one of them a dog's. But Time
Eternally redresses
With change of rhythm and ranging rhyme
Life's casual outwardnesses.
He can lift up and he can lower
The worthless world from hour to hour;
Upon the spirit he has no power.

I promise you, serene and great
Ocean, and Earth, my mother,
In days well-friended, fortunate,
My spirit will not be other
Than now it is:—I have fared not ill;
I have known joy: yet keep my will
Austere and unsubduable!

IV

The rock on all this narrow beach
Whereof the pines are wardens
That farthest seaward juts, and which
The deepest foam-flow hardens,—
This reddish-amber sandstone prow
That shears the breakers' landward flow
Is marked with iron upon its brow.

Within the tide's impetuous fling,
Where the worn crag is slanted

Waveward, a rivet and great ring
    In living rock are planted.
Their age and use alike unknown;
They are brown with ancient rust, and grown
To be a parcel of the stone.

There clings a thin-worn shell of rock
    Two inches up the rivet,
Thwarting the ocean's tempest-shock
    By strength the iron can give it.
How old the iron is, who will dare
Guess, seeing how deeply waves could wear
The rock since it was planted there?

Though worn and brown, it still is firm,
    Deep-anchored and long stable,
To hold a schooner in a storm
    Or tall three-master's cable.
It holds a loop of seaweed brown;
It grows a parcel of the stone;
Nature accepts it for her own.

How it came fresh from human hands,
    Black, brilliant from the forges!
But now—no cliff of lonely strands,
    No wave that swells and charges,
None of these wind-accepting trees,
Is cleaner of the quaint disease
Of human works and fineries.

V

Over against the beach of pines
    Four island-rocks stand sentry,
And break with sudden spray the lines
    Of billows forcing entry
Into the Pescadero cove.
Beyond them darkens, and above,
Point Lobos with his cypress-grove.

One of these rocks is sharp and tall,
    And near the base is tunnelled;
At floodtide the waves flash and fall,
    Through that arched opening funnelled.
A second one is flat and low,
Yet lifts above the tidal flow
Its surface, white as foam or snow.

White with the droppings of a flock
    Of cormorants; daily, yearly,
They stand assembled on this rock
    In ordered groups, austerely.
No wing is moved, no neck is bent;
They seem a quiet folk intent
For some miraculous event.

VI

There is no house for miles around;
    There is no human chatter;
The waves give tongue, the cliffs resound,
    The pines along the water
Murmur together, and on high

Seagulls call and curlews cry,
Wheeling low in vacant sky.

How do I love these voices more,
    These cries remote, inhuman,
These echoes of the lonely shore,
    Than words of man or woman?
Alas, it is not well with me:—
Can man wash off humanity
And wed the unmarriageable sea?

For miles around there is no house;
    Only, between the forelands,
Where those dark-tufted cypress boughs
    Are raised above the shorelands,
Remain, like seeds ill planted, bones
Ill buried, the foundation stones
Of that which was a dwelling once.

Three barren fruit-trees long untilled
    Wave gladly and weave thicker
Their wasted branches; in the field
    A few geraniums flicker,
Lost gleams of wandering red; and here
One rosetree makes one bloom a year,
And drops it where the gardens were.

And these are all. Old silences
    That know the sea's voice only
Live now beneath the cypresses
    And walk the pathways lonely.
Dear Earth, thou art so beautiful!
Lo, thou acceptest all things dull

And outcast and unusable;

Thou takest home and makest whole
    The relics and discarded
Raiment of man; each toy or tool
    By him no more regarded
To thee is dear, and grows to thee,
And finds acceptance full and free,
Even with the old hills and the sea.

O men, my brothers! even you
    She would accept, unfetter.
Look up into the free and blue:
    Have you no dreams of better
And purer lives than those you lead
About the market-place, and feed
With endless labors endless greed?

You are strangers to the earth and sky,
    And all their wonders flung you
Like pence to beggars: you, not I,
    Are exiles: from among you
I am gone home: but follow me,
And we might live as brotherly
As the brown hills and the blue sea.

Meanwhile, my voice may reach so far
    As to your ears, and waken
Some spark within you, the one star
    Your chimneys could not blacken;
And I will plead and I will cry,
And rage at you, and pass you by,
And wander under the open sky.

Wonder and Joy

The things that one grows tired of—O, be sure
They are only foolish artificial things!
Can a bird ever tire of having wings?
And I, so long as life and sense endure,
(Or brief be they!) shall nevermore inure
My heart to the recurrence of the springs,
Of the gray dawns, the gracious evenings,
The infinite wheeling stars. A wonder pure
Must ever well within me to behold
Venus decline; or great Orion, whose belt
Is studded with three nails of burning gold,
Ascend the winter heaven. Who never felt
This wondering joy may yet be good or great:
But envy him not: he is not fortunate.

Eucalyptus Trees

Thankful, my country, be to him who first
Brought hither from Australia oversea
Sapling or seed of the undeciduous tree
Whose grave and sombre foliage fears no burst
Of heat from summer-naked heavens, nor thirst
Though all the winter is rainless, and the bee
Starves, finding not a blossom. Patiently
The great roots delve, and feel though deep-immersed
Some layer of ancient moisture, and the leaves
Perish not, hanging pointed in the sky.
To see these lofty trunks gray-barked and broad
Wall with clear shade a long white southern road
I have been as one devoted, who receives
An impulse or a promise from on high.

The First Grass

It rained three autumn days; then close to frost
Under clear starlight the night shivering was.
The dawn rose cold and colorless as glass,
And when we wakened rains and clouds were lost.
The ocean surged and shouted stormy-tossed.
I went down to companion him. Alas,
What faint voice by the way? The sudden grass
Cried with thin lips as I the valley crossed,
Saying blade by blade, "Although the warm sweet rain
Awakened us, this world is all too cold.
We never dreamed it thus."—"Your champion bold
Is risen," I said; "he in an hour or twain
Will comfort you." I passed. Above the dune
Stood the wan splendorless daylight-waning moon.

When I Behold the Greatest

When I behold the greatest and most wise
Fall out of heaven, wings not by pride struck numb
Like Satan's, but to gain some humbler crumb
Of pittance from penurious granaries;
And when I see under each new disguise
The same cowardice of custom, the same dumb
Devil that drove our Wordsworth to become
Apologist of kings and priests and lies;
And how a man may find in all he loathes
Contentment after all, and so endear it
By cowardly craft it grows his inmost own;—
Then I renew my faith with firmer oaths,
And bind with more tremendous vows a spirit
That, often fallen, never has lain prone.

Juan Higera Creek

Neither your face, Higera, nor your deeds
Are known to me; and death these many years
Retains you, under grass or forest-mould.
Only a rivulet bears your name: it runs
Deep-hidden in undeciduous redwood shade
And trunks by age made holy, streaming down
A valley of the Santa Lucian hills.
There have I stopped, and though the unclouded sun
Flew high in loftiest heaven, no dapple of light
Flecked the large trunks below the leaves intense,
Nor flickered on your creek: murmuring it sought
The River of the South, which oceanward
Would sweep it down. I drank sweet water there,
And blessed your immortality. Not bronze,
Higera, nor yet marble cool the thirst;
Let bronze and marble of the rich and proud
Secure the names; your monument will last
Longer, of living water forest-pure.

The Return of Venus

These many months half hopelessly
From dune and cliff and shingle
I had watched the shining west, to see
That star which will not mingle
With other stars—the evening one,
The radiant follower of the sun.

Filled full of liquid amber light,
Above the breakers' onset,
Unclouded, vast, serene, to-night
The giant flower of sunset
Unfolded all its purity
And high perfection over me.

The crescent moon but three days old
Upon that airy splendor
Swam like a silver shell.—Behold,
What light more pure, more tender,
If such can be, began to shine
Low down above the ocean-line!

Untwinkling, O how softly pure!
How radiantly tender!
Too lovely for a man to endure:
I thought I would surrender
My very life, my very soul,
For anything so beautiful.

Like one half mad I walked the dune;
I could not watch my footing,

I could not see the crescent moon,
But only Venus floating
Low down, low down. She set too soon;
Then I beheld the little moon.

I stood beside the cove that lies
Below the Promontory.
There shone, there took me by surprise,
The crescent clothed in glory;
Between the cliffbrow and the wave
Shone, like a candle in a cave.

He Has Fallen in Love with the Mountains

He has fallen in love with the mountains:
    How should he not be blest?
Him the high canyon fountains
    Feed with coolness and rest;
Him the gray mists with pleasure
    About the day's release;
The sleepy long noons with leisure;
    And the eerie dawns with peace.

Remote, steel-gray and scornful
    The peaks; above them glides
Dawn, and purples the mournful
    Pines on the canyon sides;
Day, and the ferny fountains
    Are full and crystal-dim;
And he who has loved the mountains,
    How should they not love him?

White be the fair young maiden,
    And comely, without stain,
Her lover sorrow-laden
    Will look to her in vain,
Unhelped; for she is human,
    She will quietly pass by,
Like every other woman
    Who has lived under the sky.

Good be the friend, and grateful
    For kindnesses of old,

Yet will his eyes turn hateful,
    Yet his heart's love burn cold.
Build house-walls of cut clover;
    Lean on a fennel staff;
Put faith in friend or lover,
    And hear the high Fates laugh.

Then to the far hill-ridges
    Lift up your eyes, and slake
Your thirst among the sedges
    That lock a mountain lake
Your changèd fates bewail not:—
    Is mortal guile new-proved?
But the mountains move not, fail not,
    Never in vain beloved.

The Wanderer to His Wine-Cup

Little blue gulf of pleasure
Shot through with films of red,
In the old years fallen and dead
I loved thee out of measure.

Like mother's milk to me.
Medicinal and kindly,
O recklessly and blindly
I loved and worshipped thee.

To thee of day and night all
My hours were given up;
And sometimes, little cup,
Betrayal was thy requital.

I blamed thee not therefor;
My worship grew more fervent;
I worthily thy servant
But loved thee yet the more.

Severe art thou, not cruel,
Infinite little god;
Thou chastenest with a rod
And crownest with a jewel.

Not now as once I did
Do I need thee, O divinest;
Still like a star thou shinest,
And let the sun be hid!

And let the high sun blunder
To the ultimate eclipse,
And thou with open lips
Swallow up the wasted thunder.

Who loves thee on his knees,
Who worthily thee kisses,
Shall drink the starry abysses
And empty the huge seas.

For a Bridegroom

{ To G. F. E. }

1

But only twice or thrice
Between the silver starting-mark
    Of birth, and the strange cavernous goal,
May gleams of our lost Paradise
Revisit through the breathless dark
    That fugitive racer, the swift soul.

2

Once at a daybreak hour,
When on a child the saffron heaven
    Flows in through jasmine lattices;
Once in full manhood, if the power
We give our lives to gain, is given
    To pay that sad devotedness.

3

And once when shining wings
Flutter the lintel and the door,
    And love has entered: then rejoice!
The purpose and the hope of things
Appear, and rapturous hours resore
    To the hushed world a human voice.

4

The rest of happiness
Is peace, the second-best of boons
    A not too hostile Fate will give.
—May that also be yours, nor less
Replenished than the frequent moon's
    Calm light—the equally fugitive.

Where Shall I Take You To

Where shall I take you to,
Whither shall I fly with you,
Falcon dear, to find a nest?
—Tired are we of the flat and strict:
Take me where tall cliffs are flicked
With spray of the sea's stormiest.
Thither! or else
We two to a blue mountain's crest.

Between the land of great dead queens
And Greece of beauty intervenes
A sea where a thousand islands foam.
—Old olives will stand about our house,
Dwarf cypresses on the cliff's brows,
And vines full-fruited tangle the dome. . . .
Thither! Or else
To the flaming miraculous height, our home.

The Homely Labors

Not merely falcon-passions and the sweep
And sealike power of love;
Nor yet alone the dreams that dive hell-deep
Or fly to heaven above;
Nor yet the sense ineffable that springs
When, vast and purified,
On wine-red ocean, with enormous wings
Of cloud fiery and wide,
The day departeth as the Phoenix did,
Through death to dawn returning,
Consumed and incorruptible, and hid
In its own glory and burning;
Nor yet the spiritual agony of light
Innumerous, icy-clear,
When gapes a chasm of cloud at dead of night
And infinite stars appear;—
Not these alone, although no poet's endeavor
Can praise them well enough,
Make splendid our seclusion: but forever
I shall be mindful of
The small and daily tasks, the laying of fire,
The cleaving of fire-wood,
And how much beauty and how sweet desire
And wisdom these include.

To an Old Square Piano

(Purchased from the caretaker of an estate in Monterey.)

Whose fingers wore your ivory keys
So thin—as tempest and tide-flow
Some pearly shell, the castaway
Of indefatigable seas
On a low shingle far away—
You will not tell, we cannot know.

Only, we know that you are come,
Full of strange ghosts melodious
The old years forget the echoes of,
From the ancient house into our home;
And you will sing of old-world love,
And of ours too, and live with us.

Sweet sounds will feed you here: our woods
Are vocal with the seawind's breath;
Nor want they wing-borne choristers,
Nor the ocean's organ-interludes.
—Be true beneath her hands, even hers
Who is more to me than life or death.

Let Us Go Home to Paradise

Let us go home to Paradise,
    O my adored!
There are neither flaming sword
Prohibitive, nor angel's eyes
Jealous of our happiness.
O from this valley of distress
Look up, look back, to Paradise!

There gentle mists are drawn along
    The margins of the deep,
And up the quiet valley creep.
There the pines with low sweet song
Murmur at morning half asleep,
Trailing through each fingered bough
The gray fog on the hill's brow.

Our beautiful peninsula
    Cannot rejoice
For all its forest, and the voice
Of breaking waves in Carmel Bay,
Until we come; the cypresses
Grieve above the dove-gray seas
For us their lovers far away.

Dream of the Future

(To U. J.)

Faithful and loved, you know when at first we came
Out of the too-bright land, from a shore without trees,
Though mighty of rocks, and clothed with the same
blue wave,—
You know how our hearts were moved at looking down
From the high peninsular yoke; the breath of the morning
Hung in the pines; and this, we felt, was our home;
This, the narrow bay; the promontories;
The islands, each one rock; the capes beyond,
To the left, of Lobos, and yonder of Pescadero.
We were glad; we had found our place.
May I write for you, dearest,
The dream of a later day? The sun stood then
To the evening-side of our home, and from seaward gazed
Up-stream of the Carmel River; and I was walking
With opposite steps the road of that fair first morn.
I saw, from the yoke peninsular looking down,
Monterey, and the bay that answers to ours,
Though larger. Mightily swept, unbroken, illimitable,
The curve of the northering shore. Was it the sunrays
Cast from behind me across it that made it so infinite?
Little the town seemed; old is the town, yet it seemed
A temporal accident, somehow dropped in that vastness,
A moment permitted to be; hardly permitted.
The curve of the dunes was immense as the moving ocean;
Thought shrank from before it. How do we dare to live
In so great and tameless a land? We dare; we are here.
Our children, if Destiny guard them, may equal the land.

I pleased myself with the stately towers, the dwellings,
A century hence may witness. Yonder a villa,
All white, cypress-bowered; a cottage here
At the roadside, backed by its ploughland, seeming more firm
In rightful tenure than any tower though the tallest.

Only, O men of the future, I pray you spare
The live-oaks that dot your fields of this eastward hillside,
The ancient pinewood that crowns your hill with darkness.
Yea, be rulers, but kindly; take toll, but destroy not
With all too heavy exaction your beautiful serfs.

Yet I hold it sure that the hardness of unsubjected,
Unvassalled dominions nerves the heart in a man.
He is the best who unsubduably strives
With unsubduable nature; the happiest he
Who has tribute of water and earth, yet no whole conquest.
I am ill content, I fear the too-greatness of man.
Not uncorrupted the conqueror. Much is lost
When the tame horse runs to the bridle, or the maid to the kiss.

Our children, if Destiny guard them, may find out a land
Greater, more masterless, worthy their mastering strength.
—Where?—When Alaska is peopled, will Venus lack
ploughland?
I have dreamed that our children may even ascend to the stars.

O race of men, not to be limited, striving
With strength inexhaustible! Lo, this earth, this globe
Of subduable rock, transnavigable ocean, how long
Will it fix your minds and your hopes, insatiate children?

You have tracked the sky with your engines; on the headland
cliffs
Of La Jolla dwelling I watched them; edging the shore,
Higher than falcons, far up over the dawn-mist,
With northward beaks; San Diego had seen them arise.
And over the sky is the aether, the gulf of the planets,
The ocean of stars, the way of the wings of the morning.

Thus did I dream, descending that road which crosses
The wooded peninsular yoke, from bay to bay
Up, and then down; multiform clouds were crossing
From north-east to south-west the sky; a flight of ravens
Drove with the clouds, but more rapidly, motes on the wind.

The Year of Mourning

IN MEMORY OF W.H.J. AND M.J.

I

Ocean and solemn pines that made me whole
With influences benign: a second loss
Endured has torn my soul
At the old wound more sorely: oaks, whose moss
Is wet with winter now, as then it was,
Fresh from the feeding dews and winds of spring,
Behold what grievous doubling of *Alas,*
What twofold suffering
One dark-starred year may bring!
Out of bland May the fair and firstling fruit
Was reft in sudden dark; and now the root
Is hewn; fallen the strength! We stand no more:
I stand, though shattered: but that elder strength
Is fallen, is bruised on dust, is gone far down,
Far out of reach of sunlight: there nor length
Of vision, neither power
Of voices can behold him nor recall.
The round insensate hopeless world goes on;
And wars increase; and tumults as before
Continue; and the stars in time will fall,
And the sun's light be gone;
And we ere that conclusion long outworn
Will have preceased from striving, will have shorn
The votive lock of hair
From hope's head to despair
And life's to death devoted; and the morn

Have kindled countless fires above a shore
Vacant of man, a blue sea void of ships,—
The morn with smiling lips
Made ruddy by the old rose: but thee nor care
Of all these things, O Father! thee nor care
Nor love nor woe can touch forevermore.

II

Where art thou gone that love though mighty is powerless
To follow thee? even ours,
Even thy son's? What region blind and flowerless,
What hopelessness of exile? O, what fire
Has taken hold upon the untimely flowers
That tricked thy bier with weeping and desire
Of white rose-buds in winter—on the wreath
Of oak-leaves bronzed when thine were fallen in death—
And on the laurel not unmerited—
And on the calm white face austere—the head
Most beautiful and dead
Whereon my kiss fell vainly, and my tears
Failed as the wave's on the unresponsive stone!
Leavest thou thus alone
Me, after many years?
Me, not to see thee more, never to hear
Thy grave words, not to watch thy face: I know
That on wide ocean the late winds will blow
And on low lands the spring-wind, and restore
The wild flag and the wanton cowslips clear
In watery places; and the grasses green
On pastured hills serene:
Also the trees that now are bald and frore,
Yea and the undeciduous oaks and pines,

Will take new leaves upon them, yea and the vines:
But thou wilt not return; no more, no more.

III

—What dost thou weeping in the living spring,
Dull chanter of despair?—But what dost thou,
O lying mother, O Earth, because thy brow
With briefest blossoming
Of weeds that cannot live unto the fall
Is star-bedecked, with lies of splendor new?
—I that was old am young.—Is one of all
The same? Of those that blew
Last year is one returned? I know there is none.
—Yet I am here.— Wilt thou outlive the sun,
That perishable star?—Yet I am here.
—Nor is my grief yet perished, nor the urn
Poured empty of its perpetual return
With the reviving year.

IV

I will upon the dead world's vacant frame
Retrace his sacred footsteps reverently,
And dream his life back to the power it was.
O river westward flowing that of thy name
Namest his parent commonwealth: by thee
My years began to be;
And I was born upon thy shore, whenas
Thy shore lay stark below no yeaning moon,
Nor auguries of June;
But toward the dead of January was rolled
The torrent caked with ice and dark with cold

Under thy great-arched bridges, and the walls
And ways with no pure snow from no clear sky
Strown, but with such as falls
In towns, trodden underfoot of passers by.
Unto thy shore though but in vainest dream
Let me at length go home, O westering stream,
And entering at the issued gate, no more
Be anything, as I was naught before.
But from that cloud and breathless past to gaze
Upon his trodden ways—
Let such be my exemption from the lot
Of other souls unborn: yea now, I see
The smaller clearer stream whose pebbly throat
Made music for his boyhood, through such wood
Running, as is no more in all that land.
There with the oak and elm the hawthorn tree,
There with the birch and beech the chestnut stood,
And the tall pine: a thousand where now stand
Not twenty: and the beautiful house-door
Opened for such a brood
As the pure forest and unpopulous earth
Are parents of—the world before this flood
Which ever widening, gulfing more and more,
Makes lewd all things, makes common. Such his birth
And boyhood, who before the boyish years
Were past and gone, went forth—so burned the fire
Within him, of desire
To know and conquer. Nay, thou fitful dream,
Flee not so fast away to thy compeers!
Stay with me though but little while, and say
What nations in his strong and elder day
He saw and knew: The extreme
Of the dim eastern well-heads of the world

Were given to him with seeing eyes to scan:
The Palestinian hills where that began
Which like strong poison in the sickly world
Works yet for evil and good; medicinal
And deadly: he indeed not wholly pierced
The curtain slack and ceremonial
Of misbelieving priestcraft: nay, he twirled
Himself the loaf, and made it flesh and God
With charms and faith: so mixed with best is worst.
Yet much he knew; he burst
Many strong bonds of folly, and made broad
The beautiful steep highways of the mind.
Say further, O fair dream,
His wanderings: In the mountainous seed-plot
Of freedom and fair thought
And sweet desire of beauty, he inclined
To contemplation his great soul, and walked
In Athens marble-shrined,
And Thebes war-broken, and below the crown
Of old Thaumasius in Arcadia;
And sunward took no unregardful way
To lordly Lacedaemon; yea and divine
Eleusis knew; and drank the honeyed wine
Corinthian; and with mountain shepherds talked,
From high Pentelican pastures gazing down
On famous Marathon.
Also Nilotic glories and the waste
Of god-begetting Egypt he beheld;
And that huge oak which ere its boughs were lopped
And all its glorious crown of foliage felled
By northern axemen and the tawny-tressed
Cimmerians and fierce Vandals and the rest,
Had with strong shadow quelled

The ocean-belted orb of lands, and dropped
Sharp javelin-rooted acorns of its power
On British soil and Parthian sand alike,
And from the Iberian shore
To where the extreme Caucasian summits strike
With snowy tops the wombs of crystal snow:
And though the Roman power is dead, of Rome
The term is not yet come:
Nor is there term appointed to my woe:
But thine is fixed, Father, forevermore!

V

Much worthier men than I have made sweet song
Out of a fair friend's death since Bion died.
Moschus and grave-browed Milton:—they were strong
Enough, for aught I know, not to be sorry.
Their friends have mighty memories and shared glory.
Thou more than friend, thou dearer, art denied
All music of lament: thou hast the tones
Of a mere broken sobbing—lo, thy son's.

VI

How do I cry as unto living ears
To him that was my father! All his life
He had the calm of mountains; nor the fears
Shared of this headlong world, nor the blind strife
Was partner of: but where oaks grew, or hills
Raised age-proof heads above the troublous sea,—
There, only there upon this shaken earth,
Were creatures calm as he.
Now all his power is gone; the last of ills

Hath snatched him wholly forth:
His calm, his calm endures eternally.
How do I cry as unto who can hear?
Yea, though he heard me would he answer me,
Though to his soul most dear?

VII

White Alpine summits crowned with snow and peace,
Islanded high above the deadly flood
Of dark and sundering blood,
With you we dwelt in the old fair days when still
Peace lived on earth; and his most reverend head
Lived; and with fruitfulness of high increase—
Whether beneath Geneva's cloudy hill,
Or where more gently swelling, and bespread
With gardens and trim pines
Zuerich's arise about the sapphire lake—
He patient with me planted in my soul
Grave words of elder wisdom, and winged lines
Of deathless verse, the seeds of living fire
Struck from no recent lyre—
Bring back to me, O Alpine mountains bleak,
Those years happy forever, when yet whole
I walked with him, and wept not for his sake,
Ere he my father and the better part
Of this diminished heart
Had entrance to the mountain-cave of death!

—O wanderer, wilt thou always spend thy breath
In vanity of weeping and lament?
Dost thou alone within a world at war,
Alone bewail thy dearest? No new cause

Hast thou: to every man
If so his days be longer than one span
No other grief is sent,
And on his lessened heart no lesser scar
Heals with slow time; to such eternal laws
Let also thine assent.

—Nay, if all shares my fates then all men born
Are the more lost, nor I the less forlorn.

VIII

O lordly oaks and pines of mine own shore
To you will I returning plain my grief.
Now is full summer bright in all your boughs;
Now is the water dried that wont to pour
Adown the valley brawling; now the brows
Of heaven show gold on azure but no cloud;
Dry are both moss and leaf;
And dry the ferns that grew by the low house.
Thou only at hot noonday speakest loud,
Great ocean; from afar I hear thy voice.
Is it for joy, or dost thou also mourn?
Be still: for I will teach thee how to mourn.

O folly of the heart that will not learn
What yet it needs must know!
These creatures are too mighty to rejoice,
Too strong to suffer woe.
They live not weakly nor of woman born;
Nor grief's nor pleasure's dire vicissitude
Tempers their loftiest mood.
Serene are they, yet stern;
And of their natures next to supreme God.

Where on white sand the long waves roll and break
Under the azure fervor of the noon;
Where on gray cliffheads walled of giant stone
The cypresses of the Peninsula
Their bright-green foliage in the westwind shake,
And through gnarled roots feel the impetuous tide
Lash with long foam and jets of whirling spray
Their natal rocks; and where
The Santa Lucian hills their forest-pride
Of northward pines and redwoods in the south
Raise in serenest air;
And where behind its bar the Carmel-mouth
Stagnates at noon of summer, and through sand
Creeps oceanward from reedy pastureland:—
In all these schools have I applied my heart
To wisdom, yea with tears; and lo how small
My learning is; alas, how far apart
From the great wisdom that informs them all!
Natheless have I done well unto this hour;
Nor could I spare one day of all my days
For any worldling's, though with love or praise
Crowned, or with perfumed ease or golden power.

Yet stand my counsellors dumb before this death;
Or in strange tongues with little hope respond;
Or breathe unwonted scorn.
—Ye doubtless, doubtless ye, the tall pine saith,
Self-moving, intricately made, and formed
From no earth-planted seed but mother-warmed,
And in due season born,
Ye in due season dying, have life beyond.
For us, when the ignorant tempest brings us low,
Or woodsman's iron craft, or crank old age

Ruddying the needles on the barren bough,
Somewhile we lie dead wood in forest-mould;
The elements take us home; the pilgrimage
Begins all new, and there is nothing old.
Leaves none of ours draw back from earth and air
The essence of the beauty that we were.
Ye doubtless— But in scorn the pinetree spoke,
Or thus meseemed. Like answer gave the hills
Santa Lucian, and the rocks and wave.
Yea, even that tended oak,
Which, rooted by the house-door, daily feels—
O love, O weak to help, mighty to weep!—
My presence, and the love that could not save.

IX

Shall I seek darker counsel, shall I take
Resort to such as murmur in the gloom
With tortured Pythian lips familiar names
And tongues of mortal slumber? Must I fee
That lost king's Endor-witch to answer me?

Gray gossip of the unreverberant tomb,
By thy familiar spirit for my sake
Call him up hither whom my heart reclaims
With anguish and sore yearning!
Yea, the tone
Is nearly his; yea, almost thus he spake.
That lying spirit of thine is keen of wit,
An excellent mime; could well-night counterfeit
For very God the cry of his dead son!
Our þaser part of consciousness flows over,
And mocks us from without. Thence Gods were made.

Thence to the desolate lover
A phantom of his grief, no holier shade,
Comes in at deep of night through bolted doors;
Ere cockcrow past and gone:
Then, watched through sleep-wet eyelashes, gray dawn
Stains the far sky and trails with fog the shores.

X

Ocean and shore, grave pines, oaks alway green,
Oaks large-limbed, alway green, and ye not less,
Peninsular cypresses
That nearest overbrow the wave serene,
Ye keep much purer counsel, nor deceive.

You in wet winter the wild storms will rend,
Raging from wave to hill; and through the vale
Like iron-winged vultures toiling, bid you grieve
For leaves dispersèd and the wasted year.
But now fair autumn fans you; without fail
The course of spring will cure: but us no end,
No end of woe is meted; us the year
All-grievous strikes; in May the flower first-born,
At the dark solstice fell the father-stem.
And all year through that flood of wrath and fear
Waxes beyond the flowerings of the morn;
That sanguine flood, and fills with death the world.
O rather with those millions, O with them
Much rather would I bleed and perish, hurled
Into the monstrous gape
And ravening maw of war, so thou mightst live!
And she have lived; and thou, O Father, shape
The splendor of her opening youth, and give
Wise counsel and sweet love, as unto me
So unto her, to a much worthier end!

Us evermore, O wood, the stormwinds rend;
You but a narrow season, and soon done.

I will look up unto the holy sun,
The all-visiting light, the cloudless God, and ask
What he has known of whither the dead flee.
Yea, and with sleepless questioning will task
The flaming walls of heaven, the hearthless fires,
The stars for light in this dark mystery.
They know but the one universe; them tires
Not the blind falcon hope, with feverish flight
Forever circling; not the meagre wolf
Of sorrow hunts them down.
They overgaze all gulfs but that one gulf
Obscurest; that alone
Beyond their witness opens on a night
Awful, discrowned of stars, naked of light.

They age, burn crimson, wane, are blackened out.
Vega from her young glory fiery-wan
Turns; the wroth Bull's red glare, Aldebaran,
Feels coldest aether take him roundabout
With age and slow decay; he wanes content.
New lamps from the Protean element
Blaze forth when these are blackened; these return
No more, no more; they care not though they perish;
Though their companions and their mates die first
No sorrow bids them the less boldly burn.
O fools are we! who cherish
Long loves in such a travelling world, who thirst
For that which the stars know not, which the Gods
Have not: were feigned to have:
That blossom rooted in the bottomless grave,
The impossible dawning of that second morn.

XI

Thus cried the young man, and veiled his brows, and wept.

As lain on ocean-shore the various sand,
Shell-pink and white and purple, nightly swept
By the tide's liquid yet unequal hand,
Shows often a strange hue: like mountain snows
The whole beach gleams at dawn; all porphyrine
Glooms in the morning of the second day;
And, when the moon has waned, like roseate wine
Flows to the wave, as differing winds dispose:
Thus on the singer's voice had sorrow brought
Still various colors upward from his mind.
But now, as when hard northern storms have way
The beach is swept all bare: so further thought
Failed from the broken song.
As rise from wrack of winter sand the blind
Long-buried rocks forth-jutting, and the bones
Of shipwreck from their yearlong shrouding rise,
Thus did his grief rise bare; and in low tones
He sang not but he wept, with veilèd eyes
Remembering: long his woe; his memories long.

XII

A year is past, a year is past and gone;
Yea, it is winter now.
On loud-winged southern blasts the rain-clouds blow.
The star-zoned Huntsman opposite the sun
Arises in the evening; all night long
He paces heaven, at dawn he seeks the wave.
The hearths flame up with smoking pitch; the strong
Shag-fetlocked horses tug the winter plough.
The days are clipped and dark; sharp herbage brave

Pricks feebly the hard footprints of the frost.
That day approaches: in the winter thou
Didst leave us; at the solstice thou wast lost.

Lost? No, but we that lost thee, lost are we;
Or lacking strength were so.
Strength needs must have who travels this hard world.
Not lost art thou; thou hast but girded thee
And taken staff in hand, thither to go
Whence thou of old didst come:—
As one comes forth when the east is gray impearled,
And all day laboring in the toilsome field
At evenfall right gladly goeth home.

But thou no more to hill or field returnest;
No second dawn, infinite night is sealed
Over the bed of thy belovèd sleep.
Ours in our turn to labor; ours to weep,
Yet sparely now; ours to be strong and earnest,
Kindly and strong as thou; and ours to keep
The ensample of thy life forevermore.
While that remains is all of thine departed?
Can that be lost if we be faithful-hearted?
No wave but makes some record on the shore;
No wind but writes memorial; flesh and breath,
Spirit and flesh as wind and wave are fled;
Not all the man is dead:
His greater soul takes life—yea, even from death.

Behold, the unteachable heart
Insatiate of its grief yet moans in vain
Being mortal for mortality again;
Wanting the baser, not the better part.

Grieve then, and have enough.
Brim the deep urn, have all thy fill of pain!
Yet he for all thy weeping, all thy love,
All thy long weeping, will not wake again.

He is gone down where Fate and adverse Gods
Trample all things great, all honored things: the plain
Envies the mountain; Life assenting nods,
And all that power is levelled.—Save be true
The vulgar dreams; or that more lofty and wise
Which from eternal change doth build anew
At long recurrence of the sage's year
All mortal things forever:—little cheer
I find; nothing to fear;
Whether or no this dream be someway true.

This we have known: Virtue and strength and love,
Courage and freedom, do themselves reward;
Life has been good, being hard:
So much we hold for sure; and like enough
Shall know not more, though all be formed anew,
And thou be born again, and all be so
As in old years before;
And thou be taken home from us once more;
And we on death-cold ashes falling low .
Not weakly mourn thee, not with common woe
Consolable; but such as those have known
Who to their lord with huge unmortared stone
Built great memorials near the Breton shore.

Song of Quietness

Drink deep, drink deep of quietness,
    And on the margins of the sea
Remember not thine old distress
    Nor all the miseries to be.
Calmer than mists, and cold
As they, that fold on fold
Up the dim valley are rolled,
    Learn thou to be.

The Past—it was a feverish dream,
    A drunken slumber full of tears.
The Future—O what wild wings gleam,
    Wheeled in the van of desperate years!
Thou lovedst the evening: dawn
Glimmers; the night is gone:—
What dangers lure thee on,
    What dreams more fierce?

But meanwhile, now the east is gray,
    The hour is pale, the cocks yet dumb,
Be glad before the birth of day,
    Take thy brief rest ere morning come:
Here in the beautiful woods
All night the sea-mist floods,—
Thy last of solitudes,
    Thy yearlong home.

Ode on Human Destinies

I

Here in the beautiful peninsula
Most gladly would I rest, never to be
A wanderer more by land nor weary sea;
Here gladly would I rest, and put away
All hot and vulgar cares,
All foolish-eager dreams, only to see
The yearly blossoming of the stately pines,
And the azure limpid sweet cloud-carrying airs
That bathe the Santa Lucian summit-lines.
Here gladly would I rest, and in high verse—
Whenas that quickening spirit should have wrought
Into full ripeness the hoarded patient thought—
Of human fates rehearse
Their majesty, that needs nor God nor goal:—
Thus if long time and tranquil were assured:
But in my ears a word
Of sunderance hath been spoken, and I know
How soon the year of quiet will cease to be,
How soon from stormy and fiery years my soul
Yearn back upon her peace of long ago,
This rare tranquillity.
Therefore, albeit from heart and will most pure,
Untimely thoughts, a theme not yet mature
Are mine: but if occasion yield me space
In any future days,
Or truce of storm, I shall not fail to speak
In full what now in strains unworthy and weak,—

II

And as a messenger whom spears
Menace, in the people's ears
Shouts his word of further war,
News of danger and of hope,
Crying of death and boast of faith:—
As a falcon on the slope
Of the coming storm afar
And wildly driven,
Cries aloud 'twixt earth and heaven
Ere he pass, and down the wind
Be mingled with the lightning bright and blind.

III

I stood upon the Promontory of Stones;
A flashing day in February; an hour
Tumultuous, trembling between sun and shower
And thunder. Like a crystal torrent streamed
The wind against my face; in passionate tones
The ocean spake; the sea-line gleamed;
The wild gulls battled in the seawind's power.
On water-glimmering rocks below, some worn
And iron-bolted beams, a dead ship's bones,
Hung fast but never tranquil. Fast they hung,
Yet heaved they ever and were swung
By the ocean's touch, and soft wet slivers torn
From their hard sides. Northward the clouds were rushing;
White waves above the blackened rocks were gushing;
High on the rapid heads of twisted foam
The seawrack and the bladderwrack upborne
Writhed serpent-fashion, black and brown and green.
And white and black, across the light-blue dome

Of heaven through sudden chasms of cloud far-seen,
Strained broken vapors dizzily; silver-veiled
Quick drifts of rain in dazzling sheen
Adown the Santa Lucian slopes did come.
How many broken rainbows flashed between!
Among the mists they glowed and paled,
Gleamed and vanished: I beheld
Never a single perfect arc.
As Hope's bright pallid angels intervene
Delusive 'twixt the rushing dark
And fitful starts and lights of this our life:
So fragmentary did the rainbows lean
Out of the clouds, and vanish; in the strife
Of winds and vapors o'er the valley-throat
Inwoven they were; they shone, enduring not.
With flecks of rain and spray the wind was rife;
The westering sun's great beams
Waved like a whirling of swords
Above my head; the world seemed all to float
On thwart and sidelong streams;
As in rain-flooded river-fords
Horse and man and ferry-boat
Toppling I have seen go down,
Horse and oarsman overthrown,
And churning hoofs that struggle in the tawny flood.
—I turned, and climbed a little way, and stood
Beside that mighty boulder-stone
Which, with its brothers, names the Promontory.
Serene it stands, a child of the Earth's own;
With light-gray lichen old its flanks are hoary;
And such a monument it seems
As primal men laboring in dreams
At Stonehenge raised or near the Breton shore

Unto some God's or mortal chieftain's glory;
But this not human, thence intransitory,
Stands, and the ocean's roar
Shakes it not; from so deep-grown root it springs,
Knit with the Earth's old central stony core.
—Above it flashed the fragmentary bows,
Swept the storm and swooped the wild sea-wings;
It stood in strong repose,
Unmoving evermore.
Thither when I was tired of turbulence
And of the day's and light's impermanence,
The sunderings, the vanishings,
I lifted up my eyes and heart, to adore
The inveterate stability of things.
—Toward evening moved the day; the mighty world
Silently eastward whirled;
Above the waves the windy sunset burned.
—Unmoving was that monumental stone?
Unmoved, when all the face of Earth is turned?
—Yea, as to man unmoved.
Ourselves are the only measure of our thought.
How can we know or how acknowledge aught
Except it be our own?
Not the mere bulk of granite is approved
Steadfast; but we have sought
Into the very soul of things, and known
Of our own souls the very steadfastness.

IV

Nothing of man's is strange to man:
Who of old the course began
Runs the course: he finishes.

In the future wild and dim,
Full of wings and fiery-wan,
Many fates and much distress
Multiform, keep watch for him;
The sun will redden, the Earth grow strange:
Man will change not, though all Gods
Utterly change.
He will change not, being whole,
Body and sense and breath and soul;
Though his tents of night and daily abodes
Be moved above his mortal head;
Though the Lyre the northern pole,
Vega and the starry Lyre,
Mark; as once the mariner led,
Once of old, his oar and sail
By the faint ethereal fire
Thuban of the Dragon shed.
Sway of the poles will not avail:—
Nay, if the Earth's long-fruitful strength
Be dried, her bosom drained at length
Of seasonable milk, and fail
The pastures of the flocks unfed;
And Man with unreturning course
Into the breathless aether force
His guarded way, and colonize
A later planet,—he shall dread
Nothing in the infinite skies,
Nothing, knowing from afar
The vapor-girdled Evening Star
Younger sister of his mother,
And her house vine-garlanded
To hail him welcome; and with love
Greet the ten-mooned heavens of Jove,

The old sweet Earth's own elder brother.
—Far and fearless though the course be sped,
Death, O Man, will reap at last
All the heritage thou hast:
He cannot change thee; and the dead
Stand forever safeguarded
In the chambers of the Past;
As a mighty monarch's gem
So they are watched and held in state,
With a seal upon the gate,
Time, the giant, guarding them.

V

But we that live, not less are we secure
Than the ancient dead or those of yesterday.
We have nothing to endure
Not from of old determined; nor our feet
Travel in any unpredestined way.
The path of one by waters pale and sweet
Runs, harmless of all frost and fervent heat:
Another's track the eagles gray
Of mountains, and the summits hoar
Witness; on his head are spilled
Icy rains, and eager lightnings gild
The edges of the precipice;
He hears the mountain-torrents roar
Deep under in the vapor-dimmed abyss:—
Let neither tremble, neither falter
In the course he cannot alter;
Each walks a way long chosen, long before;
That path as well as this
In surest guidance is;

Fate, that alone is God, can change no more
Than the strong traveller may control,
His necessary courses toward the timeless goal.

VI

No wilful rage, nor breach of natural bonds,
Is this that battens with innumerous agonies
Europe's blood-wonted boundaries, not before
Satiate;—nor the tumults and the cries
Burdening our wind from eastward are the breath
Of life at length despondent:—who desponds
Knows not the bitter strength that grows at core
Of this old living Earth; he has fed on lies
In time of quiet, therefore now his faith
Fails in the thunderous hour, the harvest-home of death.
Behold, our faith may be as even the Earth's
Unhopeful and firm-rooted.—The man dies?
The race is hardly yeaning yet. The race
At length will perish also? Other births
Even now are quickening in the timeless womb.
Life tortures the old clay to later form;
That least reluctant gulf the eternal tomb
Regorges still his tenants, and the storm
That gluts him is but herald of new games.
Something endures; the universal Power
Endures forever; we, the whiffs and flames
That breathe and flicker for one briefest hour,
We also have our dignity, being part
Of the immortal thing;—we serve our nearest aims:—
The fox goes forth to ravage; the antlered hart
Finds out his richest pasturage; the man
Takes where he may and harvests all he can;
Or mayhap with unreasonable divine

Excesses of desire loves friend or mate
Or form of natural beauty, and fulfils
His nature's need to loveward:—what he wills
Is part and substance of the immense design:
He is beautiful and great,
Being work and will, being child and slave, of constant Fate.

VII

The holy multitude of night,
The innumerable stars, with light
Their beauty, as it were of flowers
The fragrance after sudden showers,
Pour forth immeasurably, and flood
The infinite world; as it were a God
The sun from the orient mountain springs
Into glorious day, with wings
Far-shining; by his lightning shaken
The hills are changed, the forests waken,
Million-waved the ocean dances,
The rocky isles at random sown
Gleam, and the cliffs: the watcher fancies
A spirit flashing from the stone.
A wind is up, and swarming wings
Of gull and tern and sanderlings
Wheel above the whitening waves
That break in spray on cliff and shingle;
Land and ocean lift and mingle
With the sun's ethereal splendor;
On the hill the pinetree waves
Ritual weight of sacred branches,
Wafting fragrance; fair and slender
Flagflowers bloom in purple ranks

In open glades by water banks
Where the doe her fever stanches;
Yellow pansies brown and brightening
From the windy foreland render
To the sun their silent thanks;
The red-shafted woodpecker
Through the upper forest launches
Arrow-flights of ruddy lightning;
Where the streaming billow blanches
Rise the wings; a vapor tender
Rises like a spirit there,
Pearling the pure air.
Mighty Spirit, from the stone
Flashing, from the sea exhaling,
On the azure hill thy garments trailing
Floating in glory from the sun,
Soaring in melody and mirth
From the forest and mild earth;
As lately from thine ancient throne
Of orb on orb of starry flame
Ere the dawn thou lookedst down:—
Have I seen thee, have I known
Thee in all thy forms the same,
Holy Spirit, loveliest one?
Lovely, dear, and terrible,
Have I known thee well?
Beauty is thy human name;
Yet ere the sun had been, thou art;
Time and the outer cold will slay
The currents of his burning heart,
But thou remainest; death will lay
A finger on the race of man
And all our hearts that yearn to thee;

The flame art thou, the fuel are we;
All must end that once began;
The holy stars will cease to be;
But thou art from eternity.
The rhythm of universal things
Art thou: what light is to the sun,
Or swiftness to the swallow's wings,
Or smiting to the wielded sword,
Or thought to man, O loveliest one,
That art thou to eternal Fate.
His spirit thou art, his child, his mate,
His great fulfilment. No mean lord
We serve and share with, serving thee,
O twin-born bride of Destiny!

VIII

The mighty vision vanishes;
The breathing that fulfilled this bruisèd reed
Fails, the poor stops are faint and whisperless.
They will again awaken, when the need
Is greater, and in greater power will praise
That purest loveliness.
I, driven ahead on undiscovered ways
Yet predetermined, do not fail to see,
Over the fog and dust of dream and deed,
The holy spirit, Beauty, beckoning me.

A Note about Places

The Monterey Peninsula takes name from the town of Monterey, capital of California in Spanish and Mexican times, situated some ninety miles south of San Francisco. The peninsula is a little one, about four miles wide and as many long. The Carmel River empties just south of it; the Carmel Mission (founded 1770), one link of that long chain of churches and cloisters built by Franciscan missionaries for the conversion of the Indians, stands near the north bank of the river-mouth. The peninsula is heavily forested; its westward rocks, and those of Point Lobos, a little to the south, are fringed with Monterey cypresses, trees of tempestuous grandeur, and of a sort peculiar to the place. Pines compose the bulk of the forest.

The Santa Lucian hills overlook the Carmel River and extend southward along the coast. Their northernmost slopes are pine-crested; the valleys beyond are forested with redwoods (sequoias) and oaks and Santa Lucian firs. This region, and the peninsula, are made aerially beautiful by cloud-play and the frequent ocean-mists. The clouds most often hang low, half veiling the hills; yet the atmosphere is singularly transparent, and I have been astonished by the brilliancy of the sky, during thunderstorms, in heavy and starless nights.

Redondo, where Emilia lived, is a sea-port near Los Angeles. Old Baldy (Mount San Antonio)—spoken of in "Maldrove"—is visible from Los Angeles, some sixty miles to the northeast. Farther still is Grayback (Mount San Gorgonio), and a little higher; both peaks are patched with snow in mid-summer. La Cumbre, less than half as high, and forestless, is the mountain overlooking Santa Barbara. The peaks and canyons named in "The Belled Doe" are all quite near to Los Angeles, on the north. La Jolla (pronounced approximately La Hoya) is suburban to San Diego.

The San Bernardino Mountains, scene of the poem called "Stephen Brown," are beautifully wooded and richly watered. I remember especially the fountains spoken of in the first stanza of that poem, and how they surprised me, who had just climbed from the parched lowland. They were flowing full and crystalline, in late autumn, before the first rain.

I may be allowed thus much by way of epilogue, the poems being so closely involved in the nature of the country. The story of the three Avilas, for example, grew up like a plant from the ravine described in it, through which the first stream north of the river flows into Carmel Bay;—the story about Ruth Alison derived from a clump of perfectly albino redwood shoots in the Big Sur Valley, from a few people met there, and from the grand and sombre beauty of that forest.

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